The Curse of
Palmyra Island
Curt Rowlett

The Curse of Palmyra Island

A *Labyrinth13* Chapbook ©

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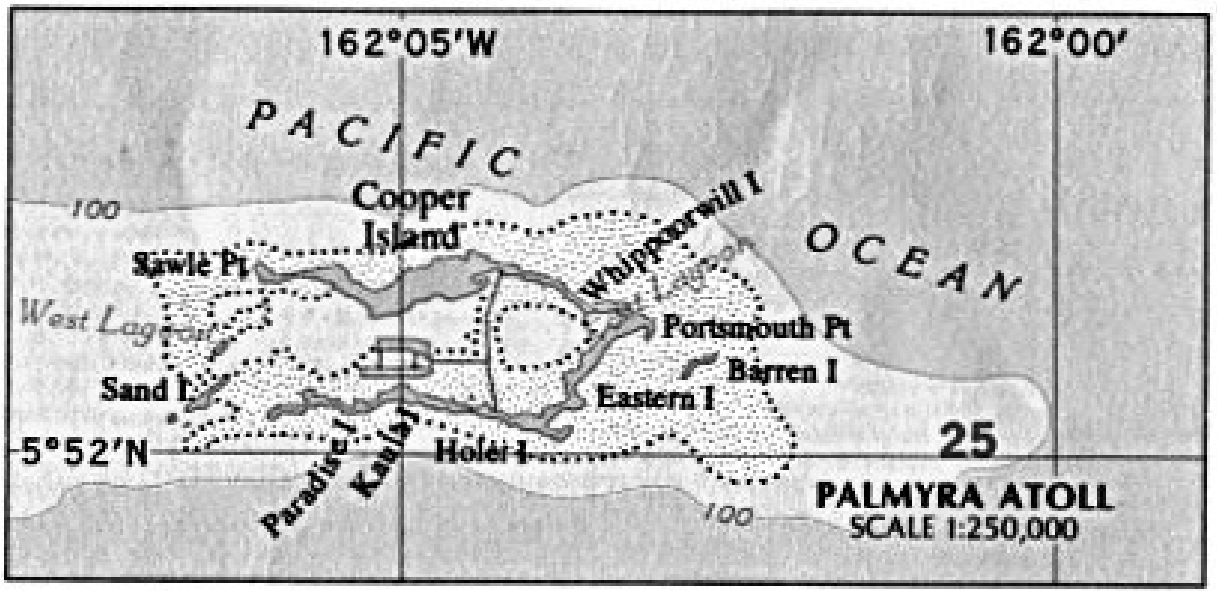
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Introduction

"There is no Frigate like a Book, to take us Lands away."

Emily Dickinson

I am one of those people who takes delight in travel, even if it is only that variety of vicarious experience that one finds when immersed in the pages of a good book.

As any seasoned reader knows, a well-written book can transport a person to exciting and faraway places. I would even venture to say that this is the *primary reason* as to why most of us like to read. Reading is good, clean, and harmless fun; a pastime readily available to anyone, and all from the safety of a preferred reading perch.

But every now and again there comes a truly singular moment - perhaps as rare as once in a lifetime – when a book becomes a bit more than simply a momentary distraction from daily life. One embarks on a reading voyage, fully expecting to end up at a particular place, and finds that unforeseen circumstance – call it *fate* if you like –leads deep into unexpected places.

I know because it happened to me.

The Curse of Palmyra Island came about as a result of my reading Vincent T. Bugliosi and Bruce Henderson's outstanding true crime novel, *And the Sea Will Tell*, the story of the grisly 1974 double murder that took place on Palmyra Island, an isolated, South Pacific atoll.

As a true crime buff, I found *And the Sea Will Tell* to be a comprehensive and fascinating read; the book covers all of the events that took place leading up to the murders of sailing couple Malcolm "Mac" Graham and Eleanor "Muff" Graham and the controversial criminal trial that followed.

In addition to being entertained by the story *per se*, something very different caught and held my attention while I was reading. I was fascinated by the authors' continuous references to a supposed "curse" or malevolent aura that Palmyra Island seemed to possess. As a life-long student of the strange and bizarre, it was enough to entice me into taking a closer look and I began digging into the alleged supernatural aspects of the story.

My research into the Palmyra supernatural angle progressed and the story that eventually grew out of it was *not* centered on the Graham murder case. Instead, *The Curse of Palmyra Island* focuses on the

paranormal angle of the story, going further and deeper into all the places where *And the Sea Will Tell* leaves off.

As my research uncovered more on the history of the island, I learned that strange events had *always* been associated with Palmyra and that weird occurrences began much, much earlier than the 1974 murders that *And the Sea Will Tell* is based on. In fact, from as early as 1798, when the island was officially "discovered," the history of the atoll is replete with strange happenings and disastrous events that have continued well into modern times.

Since the first publishing of *The Curse of Palmyra Island* story on my website in 1999, I have been contacted by quite a few people who have either visited Palmyra or lived there for short periods of time. Most have shared similar stories. They found Palmyra to be nothing short of paradise on earth and that while there, they had no sense of anything being out of the ordinary (if indeed one can ever call a stay on a remote tropical atoll *ordinary*). I don't doubt their experiences for a second. However, when the total history of the island is taken into account, there seems to be another side to the Palmyra "equation." My story was written in order to relate what I discovered; that an intriguing series of strange happenings, weird coincidences and synchronicities are associated with the place.

During the course of writing this story, I interviewed many sailors and yachting folk who had known the Grahams, or who had visited Palmyra both before and after the murders. I also spoke with numerous servicemen who were stationed there during World War II, including one former Navy man who was in charge of radio communications on Palmyra during the war and who described to me in intricate detail what life was like on the island during that time.

I was also contacted by Ted Cooper, the great-grandson of the late Judge Henry Ernest Cooper Sr. of Hawaii, whose family (at the time of our correspondence) still owned part of Palmyra Island. Ted supplied me with critical data about Palmyra's ownership history and with information about the atoll itself.

I also corresponded briefly with Vincent Bugliosi, author of *And the Sea Will Tell*, who very kindly answered my questions concerning the remaining mysteries associated with Palmyra and the murders that occurred there. Similarly, I was also contacted by and subsequently conducted interviews with Rob and Sharon Jordan, the South African yachting couple who discovered the remains of murder victim Muff Graham on Palmyra.

Later I was to discover personally just how the "supernatural aura" of Palmyra really *does* seem to affect the lives of all who come into

contact with it: Not long after *The Curse of Palmyra* was published on the Internet, I was contacted by *The Nature Conservancy*, a non-profit group that specializes in protecting endangered species and natural habitats around the world. *The Nature Conservancy* had put in a bid for the purchase of Palmyra and wanted to use my story to help publicize the history of the island as part of their effort to generate public interest and support for their cause. Being sympathetic to environmentalist issues, I readily agreed.

The Nature Conservancy has since purchased Palmyra and established the atoll as a permanent bird sanctuary. This means that Palmyra will be protected from future commercial development and human exploitation. In fact, at one time, Palmyra was considered by the United States as a possible nuclear waste dump; now it will be allowed to return to its natural state.

As a result of my working with *The Nature Conservancy*, this author found it to be somewhat uncanny that my own interest in the island ended up entangling me in its history! Accordingly, I am proud that, in my own small way, I was able to lend a hand toward Palmyra's preservation.

My journey into the history of Palmyra, which began with the innocent act of cracking open a book, has proved to have been an eye-opening "expedition" for me in a great many ways. I now invite you to do the same.

Come along now, reader. The boarding for your own voyage of discovery starts now.

Authors note: While it is *not* necessary for one to have read *And the Sea Will Tell* in order to enjoy the story that I have written, I think that those people who *have* read the book will appreciate the nuances found herein in much greater depth.

Synchronicity: *the quality or fact of being synchronous; the coincidental occurrence of events and especially psychic events (as similar thoughts in widely separated persons or a mental image of an unexpected event before it happens) that seem related, but are not explained by conventional mechanisms of causality used especially in the psychology of Dr. C. G. Jung*

Definition of *synchronicity* from the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

"The concept of synchronicity indicates a meaningful coincidence of two or more events, where something other than the probability of chance is involved. Chance is a statistical concept which 'explains' deviations within certain patterns of probability. Synchronicity elucidates meaningful arrangements and coincidence which somehow go beyond the calculations of probability. Pre-cognition, clairvoyance, telepathy, etc. are phenomena which are inexplicable through chance, but become empirically intelligible through the employment of the principle of synchronicity, which suggests a kind of harmony at work in the interrelation of both psychic and physical events."

Carl G. Jung from *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*

"*My present wife visited there in 1997 and she had read nothing about the island at all. She spent two days there and when I met her, she spoke of feeling a sense of foreboding there. She is actually an extremely rational person, and I have questioned her on that issue; in colloquial terms she describes feeling a "bad vibe" there, for sure*."

Rob Jordan, while discussing the alleged strange aura of Palmyra Island with the author

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"*Supernatural legends and a modern-day double murder make Palmyra Island 'a postcard paradise with a dangerous heart*.'"

Quote from a 1998 *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* newspaper article about Palmyra

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The Curse of Palmyra Island

Students of the strange and bizarre (like this author) are probably well versed regarding the subjects of ghosts, hauntings and curses. Most of us are probably familiar with the more classic tales of haunted houses or even haunted places like an old graveyard or spooky swamp. And for those paranormal stories with a more nautical flavor, there is always the Bermuda Triangle, and sightings of ghost ships like the *Marie Celeste* and the *Flying Dutchman*. [1]

But can an entire island also be haunted or cursed?

As an ex-Coast Guardsman, former Merchant Marine and avid sailor, I have always been drawn to strange phenomena as it relates to the world's oceans. And my interest in nautical high weirdness was rekindled as a result of reading Vincent Bugliosi's book *And the Sea Will Tell*, the true story of a double murder that took place on isolated Palmyra Island in 1974. [2]

While that book primarily focuses on the murders that occurred there during that time period, my internal radar was significantly aroused by the continuous allusions made by the authors and others who had been to the island regarding the "Palmyra curse." According to this tale, although Palmyra appears to be a tropical island paradise like something out of the movie *South Pacific*, there also seems to be a supernatural pattern of disaster and near-disaster associated with the place. While many people who have ventured to Palmyra have described it as nothing short of a true paradise here on Earth, quite a few sailors who visited the island in the time before and after the murders took place have commented on the sense of "something not being quite right" on Palmyra and speak in cloaked terms of a malevolent aura and a foreshadowing of doom that the island seems to possess. Listen to Richard Taylor, a yachtsman who spent time on Palmyra in 1977 and who had this to say in his testimony at the murder trial:

> "I had a foreboding feeling about the island. It was more than just the fact that it was a ghost-type island. It was more than that. It seemed to be an unfriendly place to be. I've been on a number of atolls, but Palmyra was different. I can't put my finger on specifically why, but it was not an island that I enjoyed being on. I think other people have had difficulties on that island." [3]

And Norman Sanders, another yachtsman who conducted geological experiments on Palmyra and who testified at the double murder trial, had this to say about the island:

> "Palmyra is one of the last uninhabited islands in the Pacific. The island is a very threatening place. It is a hostile place. I wrote in my log: 'Palmyra, a world removed from time, the place where even vinyl rots.' I have never seen vinyl rot anywhere else." He also wrote that "Palmyra will always belong to itself, never to man. It is a very forbidding place." [4]

It seems that many of these experienced and adventurous sailing people ventured to Palmyra expecting to find an island nirvana. But like Fletcher Christian and the mutineers of *HMS Bounty* who found that life on Pitcairn Island deteriorated into a grim struggle for survival, so too did their romantic notions about Palmyra soon fall apart.

Intrigued by what I was reading and hearing, I began to dig deeper into the story. And as my research progressed, the more I began to learn that the murders that took place there in 1974 were but *one* of a long list of calamities, disasters and uncanny synchronicities that have been associated with Palmyra since its discovery in the late 17th Century. (One interesting example of the many synchronicities I would discover was found in an article written by one Kristan Lawson titled "*The Mysterious Appearance and Disappearance of Maria Laxara*" which appeared in the paranormal publication *Strange Magazine*. That article discusses another mysterious island, Maria Laxara, a so-called "phantom island," which apparently had the unusual habit of "vanishing" and then reappearing over the years, an occurrence that confounded sailors and navigators over the centuries. Interestingly, a reproduction of a rare nautical map that accompanied the Lawson article also showed the location of the equally enigmatic Palmyra Island near the bottom of the illustration). [5]

A Tiny Speck in a Mass of Blue

Palmyra is officially listed by the U.S. government as an island, but is actually an *atoll*. The difference between an atoll and an island is that an atoll is formed by the growth of coral around the rim of an ancient ocean volcano that has sunk below the surface of the sea over eons of geologic time. The classic atoll is marked by a surface flatness that is barely above sea level and a rough circular or horseshoe shape.

Hundreds of such atolls dot the massive area that is the Pacific Ocean. (One of the most famous of these is Bikini Atoll, where in the 1950s, the U.S. Navy tested nuclear weapons). In proximity to Palmyra are the legendary deep trenches of the Pacific: the Mariana and Tonga

abyss, incredibly some seven miles deep and the epicenter of many earthquakes. The trenches also parallel strings of volcanic activity in the Pacific.

Palmyra Island's coordinates are 5 degrees, 53 minutes north, 162 degrees, 5 minutes west (5°53′N, 162°5′W), placing it near the very center of the Pacific Ocean or about 1000 nautical miles south-southwest of Hawaii in the North Pacific Ocean (or about one-half of the way from Hawaii to American Samoa). The island measures approximately a mile and a half in length by a half mile wide. My early research for additional information on Palmyra yielded a description of the island from a United States government geographical survey that lends much to the image of the atoll as a remote and desolate place:

> "Lying six degrees above the equator, Palmyra consists of about fifty islets covered with dense vegetation, coconut trees, and balsa-like trees up to 30 meters tall. The west lagoon is entered by a channel which will only accommodate vessels drawing 4 meters or less of water; much of the road, the landing strip and many causeways built during World War II are unserviceable and overgrown." [6]

On a nautical chart, Palmyra is but a tiny speck in the middle of the mass of blue that represents the Pacific Ocean. Because the island is situated well south of the major shipping lanes for vessels plying the Asian/American run, visiting ships are practically nonexistent. As such, the island is both sociologically and geographically one of the remotest places on earth and up until the latter part of the 20th century, one of the last few truly uninhabited islands left in the world.

Palmyra also lies at the southern edge of the Northeast trade wind belt in what is known as the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), a low pressure area caused by the heat at the equator. Because of its location in the ITCZ, the island experiences frequent heavy rain squalls and long periods of wind calm which the sailors of old referred to as the *doldrums*. In the days of early sailing exploration, a ship's crew that found themselves trapped in the doldrums faced a real possibility of death from long days of floating aimlessly without wind to push them through an area of extreme high heat and humidity.

Local fauna on Palmyra consists of mosquitoes and other insects, lizards, land and coconut crabs, a huge sea bird population consisting of sooty terns, frigate birds and red-footed boobies, and foliage that includes banyan, palm, and coconut trees and mangrove bushes. The interior is thick jungle. The coral reef and lagoons at Palmyra are also a breeding ground for gray and blacktip reef sharks, whose aggressiveness is well known throughout the Pacific and has

been noted by every person who has ever ventured to the island, some with fatal consequences. Many visitors to the island found that swimming and even wading in the island's lagoons was completely out of the question because of the large shark population and their aggressive nature. [7]

And although an abundance of fish live on the outer reefs and in the lagoons, many of them are inedible and poisonous because of *ciguatera*, a type of algae that grows on coral and which some reef fish contain in their flesh. Eating a fish contaminated with *ciguatoxins* can cause severe abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, temporary blindness and even death.

Strange Premonitions, Pirate's Gold, and the War in the Pacific

Palmyra Island was discovered by "accident" one night in 1798 by American sea captain Edmond Fanning while his ship the *Betsy* was in transit to Asia. [8] The tale of the discovery of Palmyra is one of a psychic nature in that Captain Fanning, alone in his cabin at night, was disturbed from sleep three times by such a weird premonition of danger - whether through the sixth sense that has kept many a seafaring man alive or something that can be directly attributed to Palmyra itself - that he finally went out onto the deck and shouted for the helmsman to heave to in the darkness. Dawn the next day revealed a dangerous reef lying dead ahead of the *Betsy* that would have ripped the entire bottom of the ship out and sent her to the bottom. As it turned out, this was the northern edge of the coral reef that surrounds Palmyra Island. A *Fate* magazine article of 1953 discusses this incident:

> "He (Captain Fanning) retired at 9 p.m. as usual with conditions normal, but awoke from a sound sleep between nine and ten o'clock to find himself on the upper steps of the companionway. This worried him, since he had never walked in his sleep before. After a little conversation with the first mate, who was pacing the deck, he returned to his berth. He slept less than half an hour, awoke again, and found himself once more at the head of the companionway. This time he had more conversation with the mate and returned again to his berth. Then for a third time he awoke, finding himself in the same position, but fully clothed. This so disturbed Fanning that he was convinced that it was (in his words) some kind of "supernatural intervention" and determined to lay the ship to for the rest of the night. The other officers and crew were surprised and evidently thought his mind was off balance. Leaving orders that he should be called at daybreak, he retired again and this time slept soundly. In the morning they came about and

> resumed their same course, but had not sailed far when they discovered breakers one mile ahead. The helm was instantly put over and the roaring of the breakers was heard distinctly, less than a mile away. All on board were impressed, realizing that had they been running free for another half hour, not one would have been alive by sunrise." [9]

Although Captain Fanning noted the position of the island in the ship's log, he failed to make a timely report and the official credit for discovery went to another American ship captain named Sawle, whose ship, the *Palmyra*, was blown off course in a storm that almost pushed the vessel onto the reefs near the atoll in 1802. [10]

The captain and crew of the *Palmyra* lingered for a week onshore exploring the atoll and Sawle's official report did not reach home for nearly four years:

> New island, 05° 52′ North, 162° 06′ West, with two lagoons, the west-most of which is 20 fathoms deep, lies out of the track of most navigators passing from America to Asia or Asia to America. [11]

In 1816, the *Esperanza*, a Spanish pirate ship loaded with gold and silver plunder from the Inca temples in Peru, came under attack from another vessel and a fierce battle broke out. Several crewmembers that managed to survive the fight sailed the vessel and the treasure away from the fight, only to wreck on a nearby reef. As the *Esperanza* was sinking, they managed to transfer the treasure to an island located beyond the reef whose name was Palmyra. Stranded there for a year, they supposedly buried the gold and silver under a tree on Palmyra and then sailed off on home-made rafts they had built. One raft was later rescued by an American whaling ship with only a single survivor left onboard who soon succumbed from exposure and pneumonia. The other raft was never heard from again. [12] (That bit of historical data reminds one of the mysterious Oak Island saga, where for years treasure hunters have attempted to reach a supposed buried pirate treasure deep in a pit located under a tree. Theories as to who constructed the pit and what type of treasure it may contain also include a rumor of pirate activity and Inca/Maya treasure). [13]

In 1855, officials in Tahiti received a report that a whaling ship had wrecked on Palmyra's dangerous reefs, but later attempts to locate the ship and its crew turned up nothing. [14]

In 1911, ownership of the island was granted to Judge Henry E. Cooper of Hawaii from a purchase price of $750.00. He eventually sold all but one small islet on Palmyra (Home Island), apparently believing the

rumor that priceless Inca artifacts of gold and silver, part of the pirate plunder of the *Esperanza*, was still buried there under a banyan tree. [15]

With the exception of Home Island, possession of the rest of Palmyra eventually fell to the Fullard-Leo family in 1922 and who in 1940, were soon embroiled in a legal skirmish over ownership with the United States government. The United States wanted jurisdiction of Palmyra assigned to the Department of the Navy in anticipation of World War II in the Pacific. [16]

Although the private-ownership status of Palmyra was eventually resolved in favor of the Fullard-Leo family, the island was still used as a naval air facility during World War II in the Pacific. On August 15, 1941, the atoll was officially designated by the U.S. government as Palmyra Island Naval Air Station and became a base of operations for air and submarine attacks against Japan. As a result, American military relics can be found in abundance there, such as old gun emplacements, ammunition and fuel dumps, abandoned war equipment, unexploded ordnance, machine-gun bunkers, underground tunnels and buildings, as well as what is left of the old landing strip, lending a timeless and ghostly feeling to the place.

Palmyra functioned primarily as a refueling station during World War II for war ships in transit, fighter planes engaged in long-range air patrols, and submarines on extended missions against Japan in the Pacific. The island itself was attacked only once when on December 24, 1941, a Japanese submarine surfaced offshore and began shelling both the beach and a dredging barge with its deck gun. Soon after the attack began, the sailors on Palmyra manned a five-inch gun battery and drove the submarine off. [17]

Hal Horton, a former Navy officer, was stationed on Palmyra during World War II and had this to say about his experiences on the island:

> "I was based on Palmyra for almost two years. January '42 to '44. I swear, it's like one of those South Pacific movie islands. Right out in the middle of goddamn nowhere. And uninhabited. That is, except for a few *ghosts*, maybe. Once one of our patrol planes went down near the island. We searched and searched but didn't find so much as a bolt or piece of metal. It was weird. Like they'd dropped off the edge of the earth. Another time, a plane took off from the runway, climbed to a couple hundred feet, and turned in the wrong direction. They were supposed to go north and they went south instead. It was broad daylight. We never could figure it out. There were two men aboard that

> plane. We never saw them again. We had some very bad luck on that island. Old salts in the Pacific called it the Palmyra curse. (The island) . . . is very small. You (could) fly over it at ten thousand feet and not see it if there (were) a few clouds in the sky. Once we heard a plane over head trying to find us, but he crashed in the drink before he could find the runway. We didn't get to the poor guy fast enough. Sharks found him first." [18]

While I was busy digging into the history of Palmyra during the war in the Pacific, I corresponded with William Sanders, another former Navy man stationed on Palmyra during World War II, who recalled a similar incident:

> During the period of time that I was there, I did not witness or hear of any supernatural occurrences. The only thing out of the ordinary that I might suggest is that on a place that small, there were numerous occurrences of what we called "Island Happiness," that being a sort of "slap-happy" or "punch drunk" mental state because of the long confinement to such a small place with not much to do but work for extended periods of time. I spent about a year and half on Palmyra during the same time that Hal Horton was there. We knew that Japanese submarines had penetrated the area, but that was early in the war and no bombings occurred while I was on the island. During my time on Palmyra, we lost only one airplane due to very bad weather and a pilot becoming disoriented. I was working the radar that night and it took a long time to convince the pilot he was heading away from Palmyra and needed to turn around. He ran out of gas on the way back and tried to land in the ocean in the dark and in very high waves. We never found any evidence of the wreck or crew; more than likely when that plane hit, it took a nose dive and went straight down to the bottom, taking the pilot and crew to their graves. [19]

Given the known history of disaster and the fate that has befallen certain people who ventured onto the outer reefs and inner shores of Palmyra, perhaps the island is indeed, as noted by Hal Horton, inhabited by ghosts. And the list of people who would never leave the island did not stop with the end of the war.

Murder in Paradise

In 1974, the grisly double murder of a sailing couple that became the subject of the book *And the Sea Will Tell* took place on Palmyra. The evidence at the subsequent trial for murder showed that Mac and Muff

Graham of San Diego, who had ventured to Palmyra for an extended stay of up to a year, were probably killed for their expensive sailboat, the *Sea Wind*, and the large quantity of food stores it contained. The murderer was an ex-convict and fugitive drug dealer named Wesley "Buck" Walker who, along with his girlfriend Stephanie Stearns, had also taken up residence on the island. Walker and Stearns, described by some as “hippie types,” had sailed from Hawaii to Palmyra on a small and very poorly outfitted boat. Walker was later tried, convicted, and sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Muff Graham, while Stearns was acquitted, a verdict that remains controversial to this day.

It was a full six years after the murders that the skeletal remains of Muff Graham were discovered washed ashore on Palmyra by South African sailors Sharon and Robert Jordan during their own extended stay on the island in 1981. Although the Jordan’s had heard stories from other yachting people about the murders of the Grahams, they had never connected the event to Palmyra atoll until they discovered a stack of old newspaper clippings about the missing couple laid out on a table in a building in the jungle, apparently left behind by someone attracted to the island *because* of the notoriety of the murders (and who obviously wanted to let others know about them, too).

During the course of my work on the original version of this story as a chapter for my first book, I was contacted through my website by Sharon Jordan and she agreed to be interviewed by me via email from her home in South Africa. We discussed many aspects of her extended stay on Palmyra. Concerning the murder of the Grahams, she wrote:

> “When we arrived at Palmyra we discovered that someone had left a huge pile of newspaper clippings all about the Grahams, their sailboat, their sinister disappearance, etc. The one really strange thing was that I knew with absolute certainty that I would find the remains of at least one of the Grahams. And I did.” [20]

Indeed, she did. Days later, while out beach combing on a section of Palmyra known as Strawn Island, Sharon found a human skull and other bones that had apparently fallen out of a metal box of World War II vintage that had washed up on the beach after a storm. The bones were later determined to have belonged to murder victim Muff Graham. (Sharon Jordan’s discovery of Muff Graham’s skeletal remains is in itself a long shot at the odds in that Sharon just happened to be walking along that particular stretch of one of the Earth’s most isolated beaches at what experts later determined was most likely the only time that the bones would *ever* be exposed. Evidence at the murder trial showed that the next tide would have almost certainly washed the bones back out to sea to disappear *forever*).

I also corresponded with Rob Jordan about his experiences on Palmyra. In one of his emails to me, he wrote:

> "When first seeing the box lying there with the bones spewing out of it - it really left no doubt as to what had taken place. That instant, gut feeling, was overwhelming. One of those situations where you know you could analyze it to death - but you knew, without a doubt, what had gone down. I'm sure Sharon can tell you exactly the sequence of events - she is fastidiously precise in such issues." [21]

The condition of the remains suggested that Muff Graham had been either shot or bludgeoned to death, her body dismembered, and then burned with an acetylene torch. Her body was then placed in a small metal storage container that had been removed from one of the old military rescue boats on the island and then finally, dumped into the lagoon.

Just what forces actually caused the container with Muff Graham's remains to surface is still a mystery. Vincent Bugliosi, author of *And the Sea Will Tell*, noted how the average human body, even when confined inside a container, usually floats to the surface in about ten days. Strangely, the container holding Muff Graham's body seems to have stayed submerged for almost *seven years*. (Sharon Jordan told me that she felt that it was possible that her and Rob Jordan's raising of a submerged boat from the bottom of Palmyra's lagoon - the same boat from which the two missing containers had been lifted - might have somehow caused a disturbance that allowed the container to break free from the bottom). It is also a mystery as to how the heavy wire that had been wrapped around the lid of the container to hold it shut came loose. Sharon Jordan found the wire lying next to the container still bent in the *exact* shape of the box that it was once wrapped around. [22]

Mac Graham's remains have never been recovered and are believed to have been hidden in a second missing container, perhaps somewhere on or near the island. The fact that Mac is still missing remains as one of the more enduring mysteries of Palmyra.

In the hope of obtaining new information regarding the mystery of what actually happened to Mac Graham's body, I corresponded with Vincent Bugliosi. He very kindly answered my questions about some of the lingering mysteries associated with Palmyra and the murders that occurred there. In response to my question as to what he believes may have happened to Mac Graham's body, Mr. Bugliosi replied that he did not think that an adequate search had ever been undertaken - due mainly to the atoll's high shark population - and that Mac's body was

either still hidden somewhere in Palmyra's lagoon or had been washed out to sea. [23]

While conducting my interviews with both Mr. Bugliosi and Sharon Jordan, speculation as to what might have ultimately happened to Mac Graham included the following:

• That Mac was murdered and then buried on land somewhere on Palmyra, where his remains still await possible discovery;

• That Mac was murdered and his body was placed in a second missing container (identical to the one that contained Muff Graham's remains) and sunk into one of the deeper parts of the lagoon, where it still awaits possible discovery;

• That Mac was murdered and his body was placed onboard the old sailboat belonging to Buck Walker and Stephanie Stearns (the *Iola*) who then, according to testimony and photographic evidence at their trial, scuttled the boat in a deep part of the ocean off Palmyra's coast as they were departing the island on the stolen *Sea Wind*;

• That Mac is still alive, but for reasons unknown, *purposely chose to disappear*.

Of those four theories, only the second and third are truly plausible. Mr. Bugliosi believes that there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that Mac Graham - even had he wanted to - would have been able to physically leave the island. And Sharon Jordan explained to me that because Palmyra is a rock-hard coral atoll with very little topsoil, burying *anything* on the island is virtually impossible (a fact that also tends to discount the tale that the pirates of the *Esperanza* were able to bury treasure there). [24]

Other Uncanny Occurrences

John Bryden, a witness at the murder trial, was a rugged outdoor adventurer who had spent fourteen months on Palmyra prior to the murders, trying to start a coconut plantation without success. Appearing not to be the type of individual who could be easily frightened, he nonetheless testified at the trial that "there were times when it (Palmyra) felt like a foreboding place. It sometimes felt a little bit spooky." [25]

Tom Wolfe, a yachtsman who was on Palmyra just before the murders, testified at four different criminal trials in relation to the crime. Just one month prior to the trial, Wolfe had an experience that is either yet another bit of testimony from the realm of synchronicity, or perhaps further evidence of the strange residual power that effects those who have had contact with Palmyra: One morning, after a brutal storm had hit

the coast along his beach front home located on the Puget Sound in Washington, Wolfe went out for a walk along the shore to see what kind of flotsam the storm may have deposited on the beach. A mere forty feet from his house, he spotted a cylindrical object washed up on some rocks. Uncovering the object, he was astonished to discover that it was a cardboard mailing tube containing three copies of the Palmyra Island detail chart!

Recounting this story later to one of the defense attorneys in the trial, Wolfe could only wonder at what strange forces could have caused the Palmyra chart to wash up literally on his doorstep on the eve of his scheduled testimony during a critical stage of the trail. He noted that "finding that damn chart was eerie and I'm not the superstitious type, but I'll admit, it really shook me. It was as if Palmyra, the island itself, had reached out and touched me from three thousand miles away." (If not a supernatural occurrence, one would have to wonder what the astronomical odds were of such a thing happening. In my correspondence with Tom, he told me that he still has those charts today, slightly warped with some bits of seaweed clinging to the outer edges). [26]

I was able to interview Tom Wolfe while preparing the final version of this story. Tom was at Palmyra for a little less than a week and just days before the Grahams were murdered. He would get to know Mac and Muff Graham personally, as well as both Buck Walker and Stephanie Stearns (in fact, Wolfe was attacked and bitten by one of Walker's pit bulls his first morning on the island). During dinner aboard the Graham's boat on Wolfe's final evening on the island, Muff confided to Wolfe that she lived in fear of Buck Walker. She also told him that she did not believe that she would ever leave the island alive.

Prior to sailing away from Palmyra for the island of Samoa, Tom agreed to mail some letters for Muff that she had written to her friends and family in which she may have uncannily foretold of her own demise. It would be learned later that in one of those letters that Muff wrote to a friend, she made the comment that "I think this place is evil." [27]

Continuous Coincidence and Incessant Synchronicity

And the list of strange things that occur in connection with Palmyra keeps growing; like the *Sirens* of Greek mythology, whose sweet singing lured sailors to their doom on rocky coasts, Palmyra also seems to beckon:

• In 1977, sailor Amanda Lane and four friends, while sailing to Hawaii from Micronesia on a sailboat named *Enchantress*, made a stop at Palmyra, only to be frightened off the island after just a single night by a group of strange hippies who had taken up residence there. According to Lane, she and her group fled in fear from the island after the hippies

told them a weird story about the possible deathly fate (involving either a suicide or murder by rat poison) that might have befallen one member of their group, a tale that Amanda and crew took to be a sort of veiled threat of violence and that the hippies might have been trying to imply that it was not wise for them to stay very long on Palmyra. Years later, Amanda came to believe that the hippies might have been fully aware of the fate that had befallen the Grahams and may have been trying to take advantage of that notoriety in order to have Palmyra all to themselves. The rat poison - a type known as *warfarin* - was a relic from World War II when the Palmyra Island Naval Air Station occupied the atoll. Large quantities of the poison were left behind by the military who had used it in an attempt to combat Palmyra's huge rat population. [28]

• In 1981, John Harrison, a Canadian yachtsman, along with his two daughters, Micki and Kristen, were marooned on Palmyra after their sailboat *Sisyphus* was struck by a violent typhoon and de-masted. With the help of fuel air-dropped to them by the Coast Guard, Harrison and his daughters managed to motor their disabled vessel to Palmyra. There they subsisted on fish, coconuts and what they had salvaged from their vessel, supplementing this diet with canned goods supplied by Palmyra's only permanent resident at the time, self-appointed caretaker and island hermit, Ray Landrum. Rescue plans were delayed after Palmyra's owners demanded a five million dollar cash bond before they would allow any private rescue plane to land on the island's notoriously bad runway. The Harrison family remained on Palmyra for over a month while a somewhat bizarre legal entanglement and the foot dragging of both the United States and Canadian governments ensued over whom should be responsible for assisting the three castaways. They were eventually rescued by plane after spending days clearing the old runway and were flown to Hawaii. In a final ironic twist, John Harrison was arrested as soon as he stepped off the plane. It seems that Harrison had borrowed $65,000.00 from the *Bank of British Columbia* in order to purchase *Sisyphus* and had failed to make timely payments. (One last synchronistic note: In Greek mythology, *Sisyphus* was a heartless king who was cursed by the gods after trying to deceive them. He was then banished into the underworld and condemned for all of eternity to roll a huge boulder up a hill, only to have it roll back down again, just as it reached the top. In modern times, the term *Sisyphean* is used to refer to tasks that are thought to be futile and thankless). [29]

• In 1987, after acting on a tip from a Korean fishing vessel, a sailboat was sighted by a Coast Guard C-130 aircraft just southeast of Palmyra. An aerial inspection and an attempt at radio contact revealed no sign of life onboard the drifting sailboat and Coast Guard personnel noted that the mast was broken off and that the sails were torn and shredded. A week after the sighting, the vessel – named *Marara* - was found floating in the southern part of the Intertropical Convergence Zone and boarded by Coast Guardsmen who found the skeletal remains of owner Manning

Edward (referred to as Manning Eldridge in one report) inside the sailboat's cabin. The cause of death was undetermined and a medical examiner estimated that the boat had been adrift for as long as seven months. But prior to leaving on his extended three-year voyage through the Pacific, Manning, a 43 year-old attorney from Garden Grove, California, had spoken excitedly about his plan to make his final sailing stop on an uninhabited island called Palmyra. [30]

• In 1989, another sailboat named the *Sea Dreamer*, in transit from San Diego to Hawaii was caught in a storm that pushed her far off course to the south, and onto Palmyra Island. After a brief stay on the island, the boat again departed for Hawaii and then disappeared. An extensive search by the Coast Guard between Palmyra and Hawaii and even along the coast of the United States failed to turn up any trace of the *Sea Dreamer* and the four members of the *Graham* Hughes family that were her crew. (Again in the spirit of synchronicity, you will recall that the murdered couple, Mac and Muff *Graham*, were also from *San Diego* and their vessel was named the *Sea Wind*). [31]

• In 1994, Roger Lextrait, a hermit-like caretaker hired to manage the island during the time when it was still privately owned, allegedly threatened three sailors with an assault rifle as the group was attempting to salvage *Heart of Palm*, a sailboat that had crashed onto Palmyra's outer reef. The three sailors were Cliff Merritt, owner of *Heart of Palm*, and Charlie Smith and Ray Sato, two sailors who were visiting the island on a sailboat called *Idiom* when the wreck occurred. Apparently, the three had gotten into a heated dispute with Lextrait over salvage rights to the wrecked vessel. Lextrait believed that *Heart of Palm* was a total loss and should be left alone, while the others accused Lextrait of attempting to use his authority as caretaker to charge them with some petty offense that would allow him to order them off the island so that he would have salvage rights to the boat and its valuable gear all for himself. Not long after that accusation was made, Lextrait did indeed order them to leave Palmyra and allegedly threatened Smith by saying, "You are no longer allowed on Palmyra. If you come ashore, I shall consider it a threat and will defend myself. When I do, there will not be a piece of you big enough for your mother to identify." According to Merritt, Smith, and Sato, soon afterward Lextrait was seen going about the island carrying the assault rifle, wearing Merritt's clothes from off of *Heart of* Palm, and that expensive gear missing from the sailboat was found in Lextrait's personal storage shed on the island. Shortly after the initial confrontation, a *second* boat, the *Sussex Rowan* owned by Nick and Perri Koffman, also crashed and sank on Palmyra's reef while attempting to enter the main channel. Merritt, Smith, and Sato spent several days helping the Koffman's refloat the *Sussex* Rowan, during which time Lextrait issued them a "Continued Violation" paper, which stated that they were trespassing on Palmyra and had to leave. When they had finished assisting the Koffmans, Merritt, Smith, and Sato finally left the

island on *Idiom*, bound for Samoa with as much of the gear from *Heart of* Palm as they could carry onboard and in their own words were “relieved to put Palmyra behind them.” In a statement later released by Lextrait’s employers, they denied that Lextrait had attempted to block the salvage of *Heart of Palm* or that he took items from the wreck without permission. Following the incident, Lextrait was allowed to stay on Palmyra as caretaker until the atoll was purchased by *The Nature Conservancy* in 2000. (In the history of Palmyra's solo "island caretakers," Lextrait has the distinction of being the one who actually stayed the longest). [32]

• In 2008, twelve wealthy investor/trustees of *The Nature Conservancy* were briefly stranded on Palmyra after the plane that was scheduled to collect the group from a base in Hawaii blew an engine and had to abort the flight. Attempts to hire other planes to fly to Palmyra on a rescue mission were thwarted by the reluctance of other pilots to land on the coral runway on the island due to its notoriously bad condition. After a few days of uncertainty and much world-wide press coverage about what fate might potentially befall the "Palmyra castaways," as they were quickly dubbed, a specially modified Cessna airplane was able to land on the island and shuttle the group to nearby Christmas Island. From there, a second chartered flight successfully returned the group to Honolulu. [33]

Muff Graham's Own Unnerving Omen

A last eerie note: Apparently Muff Graham may have had a premonition of her own death before she even left for Palmyra. In *And the Sea Will Tell*, the authors noted that Muff Graham often frequented a “spiritualist” from whom she sought advice. In a visit that took place just one week prior to her departure for Palmyra, the spiritualist warned Muff that “something terrible” would happen to her and Mac if she made the journey. [34]

Additionally, Muff’s friend, Marie Jamieson, was completely convinced that Muff had ESP abilities and was able to “receive vibes” of a psychic nature. In one incident that occurred just prior to her departure for Palmyra, Muff, while trying to give Marie a farewell gift of a porcelain figurine of the Virgin Mary, discovered that the figure had a huge crack in its forehead (as would Muff’s own skull when it was later discovered on Palmyra). According to Marie, she (Muff) was suddenly overwhelmed with a feeling of intense dread and holding the broken statue, tearfully told her friend, “Look at her. Look at what’s happened to her . . . Don’t you see? The hole in her head,” and then finally “I’m not coming back. Mac and I will never see you again.” Marie would later tell her husband that when Muff was telling her goodbye, she (Marie) sensed that Muff was actually telling her goodbye *forever*. [35]

Lingering Questions

Of the many lingering questions associated with Palmyra, the ones that are always foremost in my mind are this: Why does an island like Palmyra, with a recorded history of only minimal human inhabitation, seem to have such a bad "track record" for a certain percentage of individuals? Is the "Island Happiness" so facetiously noted by William Sanders really a condition of the soul inspired by some sort of unknown or little understood influence? And is there something intrinsic in the place that causes misfortune and incites otherwise rational people to madness and violence?

Whether all of the foregoing data, when considered in its entirety, simply points toward pure chance, a series of “meaningful coincidences,” or indicates actual supernatural occurrences, it still seems to me that Palmyra atoll is and always will be a truly enigmatic place, especially when one contrasts its pristine beauty in comparison to the elements that make up the alleged “curse.” But then again, I always find myself thinking of a 1998 article from the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* that referred to Palmyra as “a postcard paradise with a dangerous heart.” [36]

The purchase of Palmyra by *The Nature Conservancy* was a significant milestone in the atoll's history; that group's intended purpose is to essentially allow Palmyra to return to as pristine a condition as possible, with minimal human interference.

Remembering the words of Norman Sanders, I can’t help but agree that Palmyra not only “will always belong to itself, never to man,” but that as the final words on the subject, that is the way things *should* be.

Postscript

On Sunday, September 2, 2007, Wesley G. "Buck" Walker was released on parole from federal prison after serving 22 years of a life sentence for the murder of Muff Graham.

Walker, at age 70 upon his release, continued to deny that he murdered the Grahams.

During his incarceration, he wrote a lengthy book about the crimes in which he claimed that the murders occurred as the result of a “love triangle gone wrong.” In that book, Walker alleged that he had an affair with Muff Graham and that Mac Graham killed Muff himself in a fit of jealous rage after happening upon Walker and Mrs. Graham while the two were engaged in sex. Walker further alleged that he was later forced to kill Mac Graham in a self-defense struggle for Mac's gun and then disposed of Mac's body in a metal container.

Most chillingly, Walker wrote, "It has been the tradition since I have been at the U.S. Penitentiary at Lompoc, California, these past 12 years for the warden to treat the inmate population to barbecue picnics twice a year. Since the first one, I have never attended. I skip the camaraderie of my fellow desperadoes for the hermitage of my cave-like cell. The heavy greasy smell of searing meat reminds me of the smells I once smelled of human bodies burning - it winds up into my nostrils to permeate my soul with a sickness."

In response to Walker's claims about what actually happened on Palmyra, Assistant U.S. Attorney Elliot Enoki - the federal prosecutor who helped put Walker in prison - was quoted as saying, "It's interesting that that account would be given. He was actually tried twice - once for taking the yacht, and once for murder. Juries convicted him in both situations. I think that speaks for where he is in the criminal justice system."

Enoki declined to hypothesize on Walker's claim of a "crime of passion" defense to the murders, adding that because Mac Graham's body was still missing, the case is technically still open, but noted that there is no statute of limitations on murder.

Walker's own court-appointed attorney, Earle Partington, upon learning of his former client's new version of events, said, "It's inconceivable. We talked with a lot of people, and the Grahams were the model married couple. Nobody would have bought that. That defense would not have flown."

Though prison officials were prohibited by law from releasing medical information about Walker, one news report claimed that Walker was in "poor health," had suffered a stroke, and was on medications for both heart and lung disease.

Following his initial discharge from prison, Walker spent several weeks in a San Francisco, California halfway house and was later granted a full release.

On April 26, 2010, Buck Walker died of a stroke after several months in a California nursing home. He was 72 years old. Prior to being hospitalized, Walker had been living in a trailer home in Willits, California.

Sources:

Hawaii Tribune Herald, Sunday, May 27, 2007, article titled, A Story of Lust and Murder, by Nancy Cook Lauer.

Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Vol. 12, Issue 194, Friday, July 13, 2007, article titled, Isle murderer Buck Duane Walker up for parole, by Rod Thompson.

Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Vol. 12, Issue 245, Sunday, September 2, 2007, article titled, Palmyra killer paroled from prison, by Rod Thompson.

Associated Press, September 3, 2007 article titled, Palmyra murder-case convict freed.

Honolulu Advertiser, June 2, 2010 article titled, 'Buck' Walker infamous for high-profile Palmyra deaths.

Appendix

This appendix includes all of my correspondence with Sharon Jordan, Rob Jordan, Tom Wolfe, and Amanda Lane while I was in the process of researching and writing this story.

Both Sharon and Rob Jordan contacted me (independently of each other) after reading the excerpted version of my Palmyra story on my website. Over the course of several weeks, we discussed the time that both spent on Palmyra, the discovery of Muff Graham's remains, and their overall impressions of what it was like to live on Palmyra in complete isolation for five months.

Tom Wolfe also contacted me and was kind enough to agree to an interview. Tom was on Palmyra just prior to the murders of Mac and Muff Graham and also met Buck Walker and Stephanie Stearns while there.

"Amanda Lane," (true name not used by request, but on file with the author) contacted me almost at the time that the original version of this story was due to be published. She agreed to supply me with detailed information about the strange encounter she had on Palmyra with a menacing group of people she encountered there.

What follows are verbatim excerpts from our correspondence, including intriguing answers to some of my most important questions.

From Sharon Jordan's November 21, 2004 email:

So much time has passed since I was on Palmyra that I might have a small bit of difficulty recounting all of the details of the discovery of Muff Graham's remains. Obviously I would now run the risk of possibly not remembering every detail as accurately as I did nineteen odd years ago. The court transcripts would have it all.

For me Palmyra is the closest thing to paradise I have ever experienced. I felt as if I was part of the atoll during the roughly five months that we were there. I spent my days alone exploring different sections of the atoll. I would take a machete with me to open coconuts when I got hungry or thirsty. I swam and/or snorkeled anywhere and everywhere. The sharks were numerous but appeared well fed and were not threatening. I remember sitting on the beach of the inner lagoon and looking at the pristine beauty around me and wishing that this period would never come to an end. I still long for Palmyra.

When we arrived at Palmyra we discovered that someone had left a huge pile of newspaper clippings all about the Grahams, their sailboat, their sinister disappearance etc. The one really strange thing was that I knew with absolute certainty that I would find the remains of at least one of the Grahams. And I did.

Q and A from a November 23, 2004 email with Sharon Jordan:

Q: Can you describe in detail how and where you discovered the newspaper clippings?

A: These clippings were in the hut closest to the seaplane ramp. Other yachties had obviously looked at them before us; they were lying on a large table in this hut. I didn't read them all, just glanced through them. In retrospect I wish that I had read them all and kept them. I don't know what happened to them.

Q: Can you elaborate further on how you knew "with absolute certainty" that you would find one of the Grahams? Are you talking about just a "gut feeling" that you would find one of them or something else?

A: Gut feeling. When we approached Palmyra I was overcome with the beauty of the atoll and decided that I would explore every square inch of Palmyra. On learning about the Grahams I realized that if there was anything at all to be found, I would find it. I am a most thorough explorer.

Q: Do you have any opinion about where the remains of Mac Graham may be located on Palmyra?

A: At the time I felt that Mac's remains were totally findable working back from where I found Muff's remains and taking prevailing tidal and wind conditions into consideration. So much time has passed now that the container might have disintegrated. Muff's container showed signs of wear then already. I would love to have the opportunity to go back to Palmyra; through the years I have often thought of the Graham's family and how they must feel knowing that Mac has never been found.

[I]t seems a coincidence that about five days after we re-floated this boat, I found the container with Muff's remains. Could we have somehow dislodged this container, I wonder? Maybe the area around and particularly under the seaplane ramp should be searched if it hasn't already been searched.

Finding that container where I did is still a mystery to me. How could it have floated there? I seem to recall that it was no longer watertight and

to float would have taken a fairly substantial amount of trapped air. Or is this just another unexplainable mystery?

Q: Could you describe what a typical day exploring the island was like and what all you discovered?

A: When we arrived at Palmyra we were astounded at the set up. There were prefabricated buildings, one of them was used by the three remaining copra workers and yachties alike as the "kitchen" hut. This had a big table in it and many enjoyable feasts including Christmas lunch were had around that table! One of the other huts had quite a good selection of tools which the yachties borrowed and replaced. This had obviously been a workshop at some stage. There were also many large drums lying around with gasoline in them which everyone used for their dinghy motors. (I hope that this was all used up because those drums had almost rusted through).

Every day I would go out exploring. Sometimes my husband (sadly now ex-husband) Rob would join me but he also enjoyed relaxing and reading on our boat, *Moya* or on the "beach," a strip of land in front of the boat. So very often I would go alone. I went to a different section of the atoll every day and explored that section thoroughly. There were many reminders of the American occupation of the island, such as pitted mortar bomb casings, old stainless steel trays full of holes, old tools, the sunken boat close to the sea plane ramp, etc. Hidden in the undergrowth was a cool, dark, half-round bomb shelter. The crashed airplane on the old runway was very interesting; the aviation fuel [from it] was also used by the yachties. My best finds were along the water's edge; the interesting old bottles and particularly the beautiful Japanese glass floats which came in all sizes and a wonderful variety of colors. I now have some of these lying in my lounge - a constant reminder of wonderful times past. I was always accompanied by one particular dog on these excursions. The Islanders had told us that he was called "Navy" although in later years I believe yachties referred to this dog as "Army" which was in fact his brother's name.

During these explorations I would sometimes sit quietly either on the beach or in the undergrowth and observe and enjoy the activity around me. There were many different birds everywhere, there were a variety of crabs everywhere, likewise fish, sharks, manta rays, turtles. It really was (and hopefully still is) heaven on earth.

Fish and rice were our staples. Every day at about 1600 hours Rob and I would go out fishing in the dinghy. We often fished from the shore but fishing from the dinghy was such fun. The water was as clear as glass and I loved hanging over the side and looking at what passed by. That's how I found the sunken boat which we re-floated. (Author's note: For a full recount of how the Jordan's were able to raise an old

military boat that had sunk in Palmyra's lagoon, as well as a full recounting of the discovery of Muff Graham's remains, read *And the Sea Will Tell*).

[I]t seems a coincidence that [several] days after we re-floated this boat, I found the container with Muff's remains. Could we have somehow dislodged this container, I wonder? Maybe the area around, and particularly under, the seaplane ramp should be searched if it hasn't already been searched. I do remember though that an enormous moray eel lived under the seaplane ramp which probably put off prospective searchers.

Q: The next question that comes to mind concerns the alleged treasure that is supposedly buried on Palmyra. Did you have any knowledge about this alleged treasure prior to your stay on Palmyra? If yes, did you believe the story and/or spend any time looking for the treasure?

A: I did hear some incredibly vague story about an old shipwreck that supposedly had treasure but the story - from one of the yachties - was really too vague for it to be of any interest at that time. Also it must have been exceptionally hard to bury anything, as I'm sure Buck Walker realized, as Palmyra is a coral atoll with no real soil. Many of the large trees have an extensive surface root system to help them stay upright and during severe storms when one or two get blown over the roots pull out of the coral and project many meters into the air. Had you told me this story before we reached Palmyra, who knows, maybe I'd still be there looking for treasure!

Q: There seems to be some lingering doubt as to whether or not the shark population on Palmyra is as aggressive and dangerous as some have suggested. Did you have any close calls or dangerous experiences with the sharks on Palmyra?

A: One glorious day Rob and I decided to go for a long walk together and do a bit of snorkeling here and there. The snorkeling was always excellent and drifting between coral heads with fish as big as yourself was always an amazing experience. We started our walk when the tide was going out and crossed "causeways" to get to the different sections of the atoll. Some of these crossings were high and dry, others ankle or knee deep.

By late afternoon the tide was coming in strongly and we were rather late in our return to *Moya*. Now, one of these crossings was almost chest deep with the water flowing strongly. Rob said that he would cross first to test the depth and the difficulty of crossing. (He's a strong swimmer, I am not). He crossed rapidly and urged me to try and cross as rapidly. We had often observed sharks coming into the lagoon through these gaps. I rushed in and immediately started slipping

between chunks of coral. I did have plastic "jelly baby" sandals on to protect my feet from the cutting coral, but I found that I was getting wedged in, between bits of coral, as I slipped and struggled against the water.

Rob was shouting "Hurry, hurry!" Then he screamed, "There's a shark behind you. Get out! Quickly!" I turned to see a swirl, a large dark shape and then it hit me. My legs were completely knocked out from under me and my foot felt strange. Somehow I made the shore faster than I imagined possible only to find out that all that had happened was that my sandal was gone and I had a grazed leg.

We hotly debated this incident with Rob insisting that he had seen a shark's fin. I felt that if it was a shark it would have taken a lot more than my shoe. I thought that it was more likely one of the huge game fish that we had often seen while snorkeling. I felt that it would have been attracted to the flashing silver buckle on the side of the sandal - much like a lure. Anyway whatever it was, I'm here to tell the tale!

Regarding Buck Walker and Stephanie Stearns' boat the Iola that the couple purposely scuttled offshore of Palmyra, Sharon and I had the following email exchange:

Sharon: Also, I think that it would be very interesting to find and search the *Iola*. I wonder if she's findable.

Curt: I suspect that the *Iola* would be hard to locate. According to what I have read, the boat was scuttled in very deep water. Is that true?

Sharon: I need to read Vincent's book again to refresh my memory as to where Buck and Stephanie said they scuttled the *Iola*. I wonder if it's true that it's in deep water. [The reason why] I wondered, is because didn't Buck [Walker] say something to Leonard Wineglass about Mac's body not being on Palmyra, so it won't be found, a statement he later retracted? Maybe he knows that it's on the *Iola*. Just a thought.

Curt: I haven't read that passage of the book in quite some time, but if I recall correctly, the *Iola* was scuttled once the boats had cleared the main channel leading out of Palmyra and had entered deep water out in the ocean proper. I don't think any precise distance from the mouth of the channel was ever given in the book. If that distance was known, one could always check a nautical chart to see what depth the boat sunk in. Maybe Mac's remains are onboard. Today's modern dive technology has allowed underwater recoveries in some of the deepest waters known.

From Rob Jordan's November 27, 2004 email:

(*Here Rob discusses Sharon's finding of the bones of Muff Graham*)

When first seeing the box lying there with the bones spewing out of it, it really left no doubt as to what had taken place. That instant, gut feeling, was overwhelming. One of those situations where you know you could analyze it to death, but you knew, without a doubt, what had gone down. I'm sure Sharon can tell you exactly the sequence of events; she is fastidiously precise in such issues.

Q and A from a November 30, 2004 email from Rob Jordan:

Q: I was wondering if you had any theory as to where you think the body of Mac Graham was hidden on Palmyra? And do you think his body will ever be recovered?

A: I think it was undoubtedly dropped in right off the dock, just as the container with Muff's body likely was. I made an attempt to find it a few years ago. The water in that location is up to 100 feet deep and the visibility is really poor. The bottom is also densely strewn with military equipment in various stages of decay. It was evident on reaching the bottom that the search would need more equipment and staff than was available to me then. There is an area about 100 yards by 50 yards that would probably turn it up, but at 100 feet in those poor conditions, it would be quite an expensive project, with no financial potential. I am fairly sure that area was where he dropped Muff's container. I know so well how the currents flow in that lagoon. The location where we found the container with Muff Graham's remains, leaves little doubt in my mind as to where he dropped Mac Graham's body.

I spoke with the FBI agents in Honolulu in the late 90's and they expressed interest in locating the other box, but were not able to justify funding a search. Unfortunately, I had a perfect vessel available at that time, complete with decompression unit aboard and a lot of diving expertise.

The possibility exists that his box may surface one day, like Muff's did. It would be less and less likely as time goes by though as the container is aluminum and will probably have eroded through by now, reducing the possibility of it ever making its way to the surface

successfully. It will probably stay on the bottom there, along with all the military debris until it decays away completely.

Q: During your stay on Palmyra, did you ever have any experiences (outside of finding the remains of a murder victim) that go along with the general theme of my "Curse of Palmyra Island" story, i.e., did you experience (or hear from others who had visited there) anything about the island that can be considered "out of the ordinary" or of an unusual nature?

A: I really never did. I love the place and would sail there frequently for some peace of mind and to be alone for a bit. But I have heard people often comment on feeling that it was an "evil" place. Once Roger Lextrait (one of Palmyra's many island caretakers over the years and perhaps the most controversial) got there, there were many incidents, but those were all the result of human interaction, rather than any mysterious force. I always found the place to be extremely hospitable and happy.

My present wife visited there in 1997 and she had read nothing about the island at all. She spent two days there and when I met her, she spoke of feeling a sense of foreboding there. She is actually an extremely rational person, and I have questioned her on that issue; in colloquial terms she describes feeling a "bad vibe" there, for sure. Nothing occurred that would have contributed to this feeling, only hospitality and help. If anything, she should have had quite the opposite feeling arriving in the shelter and beauty of the place after a hard windward passage from New Caledonia.

The following is a brief essay written by Rob Jordan and featured on his website at www.cruisingservices.net. (Used here with permission from the author)

Murder in Paradise

Late 1980 saw us on the way to Palmyra Atoll. It was the most wonderful experience to arrive in that absolutely pristine, tropical environment after the previous winter up in Canada. The island has never had permanent residents for any great period, and is subsequently pretty unspoiled.

When we arrived, we found, in a hut on the island, a carefully bundled set of newspaper clippings of a saga that had unfolded on the island several years prior. They told the story of a cruising couple who had been murdered on the island and their boat stolen. The stolen boat showed up in Hawaii a few months later. It was recognized and reported. The couple was arrested. Because the bodies were never

recovered, the FBI decided to charge them only with the theft of the vessel in the hopes that something may turn up in the future that would make a murder charge more likely to succeed. The story had apparently captured the publics' imagination and was well reported in the press in Hawaii and some of the West coast of the US.

From that point on, on our daily outings on the island, every bone we saw prompted comments like "I bet that's an arm bone" or "a rib for sure."

One evening, early in 1981, I was reading in a hammock strung between two palm trees and Sharon was out foraging for interesting flotsam. I heard the crashing through the bush as she came running towards me. She held out her collecting bag with the comment, "Guess what I found." She reached in and pulled out a human skull, complete with gold dental work. "Better come quickly before the tide comes in, and see the rest of it" she urged. We raced back to the site, and there on the sand, just above the previous high tide mark, was an aluminum box, on its' side, with the lid lying just next to it, and a piece of wire, clearly used to tie it closed lying there, too. Spilling from the box was a collection of human bones, a wristwatch and a cigarette lighter. One look, and it was crystal clear what we were observing. I remember clearly the feeling as the realization set in that this story we had read on those clippings was in fact true in the worst way possible. The skull I now held in my hand was that of a fellow cruiser. We really were stunned. The scene we were looking at left no doubt whatsoever as to what had happened there.

We collected up everything and made our way somberly back to *Moya*. Once aboard, we debated what to do. *Moya* had no electrical system to speak of. I had however, packed a motorcycle battery aboard, and had made a solar panel from solar cells, with the intention of installing it later. I also had a CB radio stashed away somewhere. I set to work assembling all this that night, and had it up and running the next morning. We scrounged some old wiring from one of the sheds on the island (ex-war huts) and strung an antenna.

We could hear the Hawaiian AM radio stations at night, so my hope was that maybe they would be able to hear us on this 27mhz AM rig. It would be a long shot, but worth the effort. That evening, just as the airwaves started to pick up, I fired up the rig and selected channel 9, and transmitted a call to the Hawaii Coast Guard. The air was full of traffic - I was hearing people from all over the States. (This was the heyday of CB radio). To my astonishment, on my second call, I heard faintly in there, a response from the Hawaii Coast Guard. With great difficulty, I managed to get a brief message through regarding our find. They asked me to stand by, and a short time later, came back asking for my location. They then switched to a directional antenna, cleared the

channel for emergency traffic, and it was almost like talking on a telephone.

They were pretty insistent on one issue, I was to put the remains on the shore and not keep them on the boat. I tried hard to convince them that they would be safer aboard away from the attentions of the rats and other critters ashore, but they were adamant. We made plans to make contact the following evening before signing off. As soon as we did sign off, I was bombarded by calls from people who had been listening in. I switched off and we settled down for supper.

As was our habit, we turned on the portable radio during supper, and the news came on. We were astonished to hear the last item on the newscast - a short recap of the story of the couple who had gone missing, followed by the news that it was suspected that one of their remains might have been recovered on the atoll. The last sentence sent a chill through us both: “The suspected perpetrator, is at present believed to be an escapee.” Suddenly the FBI’s insistence regarding keeping the remains ashore made sense. This guy absolutely needed to get down there to get rid of that evidence. It surely would be his ticket to the gallows. He was an escapee with over 50 previous convictions. We slept with one ear open for an engine of any type. I had the shotgun loaded and next to me at night.

We spent the next week trying to come up with ways to get the bones back to Hawaii for analysis. The atoll is so remote as to be very difficult to get to. In the end, agents flew down to Christmas Island and had a meteorologist from the University of Hawaii fly them up to Palmyra. He kept a light plane on Christmas Island and a small remote weather station on Palmyra, and had kept the old wartime runway clear enough to land his light plane on. We did some clearing for them before they arrived, too. Their visit was a great event for us, as we had been all but alone on the island for months.

We spent a day showing them the site and searching for more bones we may have missed, and the next day fishing together. The remains were subsequently positively identified as those of the missing woman. We had noticed the inside of the box was charred, and there was what appeared to be a char mark on the skull. Apparently, what the FBI ultimately were able to ascertain, was that this criminal had shot the woman, then cut the body up with a chain saw, put it in the aluminum box, poured in gasoline, and set it alight. Then apparently, he retrieved the oxyacetylene set from the boat and tried to reduce the body further. Then he put the lid on the box (which had a rubber seal on it), bound it closed tightly with wire, attached a weight, and dropped it in the lagoon. The depth in the location where he dropped it is about 100 feet. The decomposition must have created some gasses and made the box buoyant. It would have moved over the years as the tide ebbed and

flowed until finally the wire parted and it was freed of its anchor weight. That is when it floated up and was blown ashore. Sharon just happened to be in that area at that exact time to find it. The next tide would likely have washed it away or at least scattered and buried the bones. It was actually the gold dental work gleaming in the sun that caught her eye.

The FBI agents had asked us if we would be prepared to be present at the trials to describe exactly what the scene looked like when we found it, to the jury. We, of course, were happy to oblige. They asked us to call each time we arrived at a new island on our travels, so they would know where to find us when the time came. This led to a rather enchanted trip around the world. They would phone ahead to our next port each time and notify the local police. They would ask them to report back when we arrived. Of course when we arrived at these small, far away islands, there would be great interest in hearing what this was all about. We would frequently be invited to supper with the local police chief, and would be looked after well during our stay. We subsequently were flown back to the USA to give evidence in both the trials years later, from South Africa, it turned out.

The guy was found guilty on all counts and was sentenced to life; the gal was able to employ a suitable defense and secured a not guilty verdict for her involvement. The story of her trial is recounted in the book by one of her lawyers, Vincent Bugliosi [in] *And the Sea Will Tell*." A TV movie was also made of the book [with] the same name. That little adventure had some repercussions for me in the following years.

From Tom Wolfe's December 29, 2004 email:

(*Here Tom describes his arrival on Palmyra*)

Buck introduced himself to us as Roy Allen when we first arrived and tied up right behind his boat to some old and very large boat dolphins. He came out in the dinghy and helped just a bit, but within five minutes had asked if we had any dope on us (no). Since we were very tired from being up all night, I promptly forgot his name but could read the tattoo on his arm - BUCK - and called him that from then on, to which he answered without any obvious aggression or irritation. (The movie was wrong in that respect).

I was there with Norm Sanders (6'2" maybe 225 pounds), and between us we were very fit and more than a match for Buck physically. So while he was clearly in our minds a low-life, in truth he treated us with a reasonable respect, and certainly was circumspect in any discussions about the Grahams. Possibly he was already planning their murder. He was, however, truly inept about sailing, fishing, navigation, and mechanics so he had some urgency in figuring out what to do for the long haul. He knew, and I told him as well, that his boat would be very hard pressed to get to Fanning Island, straight up wind, with no motor. I suggested that Samoa, being situated downwind, would be safer, but of course, a longer voyage. Norm and I made it the 1300 miles to Samoa in a 29 foot boat with no incidents in 13 days.

I almost never had any three-way conversations with Buck and Stephanie, only individually. Stephanie was getting concerned about survival and was trying to grow a garden on top of one of the old buildings. She was using the top because of the crabs and rats. She was upset and complained to me that Buck would always try to use her hard-won topsoil on the roof to try and grow dope. (Stephanie was truly inept as well when it came to fishing or finding food to eat).

The fact that both Buck and Stephanie were sort of starving was really amazing to me. Their big problem was laziness. She and Buck had figured out how to gather hearts of palm, but fishing - well Buck's idea was to go to an old concrete pier and shoot (with a .22 cal revolver) small mullet as they swam by! In truth, a row in the dinghy of maybe a mile at most would take you to a fishing area where only hooks (without lures) were required for as many fish as you wanted. A different half-mile row or mile walk and a short swim would take you to another island where crabs and nesting birds abounded. Acquiring a crab dinner was at most a 60 minute effort. Lobsters were apparently catchable on the reef at night using a light and spear. So starvation was not an issue if any effort was applied to it. But Buck and Stephanie were desperate to trade for canned goods, flour and sugar! As a note, on several occasions Mac took fish to Stephanie, saying we had plenty and that they could use it.

I give the above because I believe that this sets the real motivation for the murder, a motive that both parties shared equally. Specifically, Buck and Stephanie were on a real deserted island with little food, a long way from anywhere, few skills, and a broken down boat with no relief in sight. The hurricane season (August-November) was getting into full swing and there would probably not be any more boats along until January. Five months with only a few fish and coconuts was looking like a bad deal, especially when there was a boat nearby with a fully stocked larder. The fact that the boat belonged to someone else was an irritation.

"Q and A" Interview with Tom Wolfe:

Q: In your email to me, you wrote that you carried letters from Muff Graham in order to mail them in Samoa and that in one of the letters, Muff was, as you put it, "foretelling her own demise." Can you elaborate on that?

A: The content of these letters came out during the first two trials for theft of the boat. I mailed the letters for the Grahams in Samoa myself but after talking to Muff on the island it was no surprise. We had to sit around in the witness rooms at federal court in Honolulu for 7-10 days each trial, so the witnesses had a chance to talk with each other and we got regular briefings from both the FBI and the District Attorney, Bill Eggers. I think there were actually copies of the letters around which were showed to us at one time. In any case, Muff personally told me that she didn't believe that she would ever leave the island alive and I got the very distinct impression that if her husband had said "let's go tomorrow," she would have jumped up and started packing.

Q: Do you have any impressions of Palmyra that go along with the basic theme of my story?

A: Muff Graham was visibly depressed most of the time we were there. You could call it a foreboding type of depression, but of course I could only see this in retrospect. Nevertheless, she many times talked to me about "those people" and was clearly fearful of Buck. Buck had a "predator" mentality. He could smell fear and if he saw it he used it. I never witnessed him do this overtly to Muff Graham, but he obviously tried it on Norm and me. When it didn't work he quit trying. (As an aside, Buck had really poor teeth with many missing, and when he talked to you, he often "worked" one of his remaining canines with his fingers. I later heard he did this to "scare people" but to us he just looked like a guy that had never heard of floss, confirming his low life status).

Mac Graham appeared to be engaged in somewhat of a male competition with any men on the island, us included. Nothing out of the ordinary or overly aggressive but it was clear when he took us on any walks or dinghy trips that he was in charge and the pace he set was fast. Despite this he was very likeable and he relaxed his demeanor with us when we told him we would be leaving within the week. I think he felt sorry for Stephanie but despised Buck for being incompetent. Stephanie had the “innocent little girl” approach when she talked to you and was not unpleasant to chat with. She was at least on talking terms with Mac, even though Muff appeared to go out of her way to avoid her.

My basic impression of Palmyra was, “Wow, this really is the deserted island everyone is looking for." It was big enough, had plenty of fresh water, old buildings, and food was everywhere. Norm was more sensitive to the isolated feel (and reality) of the place, commenting that here was a place where even Styrofoam and plastic bags decayed. He wanted to leave sooner than I, but we compromised. I did get one sense of Norm’s apprehension when we went mullet fishing with Buck and his . 22 pistol. Norm hadn’t seen the gun and when he heard the shot it really surprised him and he quickly ducked behind a tree. Buck didn’t see him do that, but I did and later he told me that he thought Buck had shot me! I was much more cautious around Buck after that incident. (By the way, we didn’t get any fish, despite him emptying the revolver).

Q: Did Muff Graham ever confide in you concerning her fears about Palmyra?

A: On our final night, the Grahams invited us to dinner, and by this time Muff had made it perfectly clear to me over the last few days that she did not like to be there on Palmyra any longer and that she really hated Buck and Stephanie. We had just heard that morning that Buck’s friends who were supposed to be coming down to re-supply them were not going to come after all (message passed on by Mac’s ham radio) which really added to her depression. During this dinner, Mac ended up showing us his gun collection, including the derringer and the .357 magnum revolver. In the end, I simply told Mac and Muff to be careful, as these guys could kill you and steal your boat and probably never get caught. Mac’s answer to that was “I’m tougher than they are.” And please note that he used the word “they” not “he” so clearly he was referring to *both* Buck and Stephanie.

Q: Did you, as the book *And the Sea Will Tell* states, sense tension in the air between the Grahams and Buck Walker/Stephanie Stearns as soon as you arrived there?

A: Yes and lots of it, but of a multi-faceted sort. The first tension came from the fact that both couples wanted to do the “deserted island” scene by themselves and the presence of the other couple was a real irritation.

Muff had fear, which obviously causes tension, while Mac was wary of what could happen, but really didn't believe it would and his wife subtly kept the pressure on him.

The really spooky thing to me was the rat poison incident. I had been working in the pesticide industry and knew what *warfarin* poison was: a tasteless poison that causes internal bleeding. Many boxes of the poison (50-100 pounds maybe) were in one of the sheds about midway between the Graham's boat and Buck's boat. I saw it one day, and even remarked to Norm about it. Since there were lots of rats, it did not seem unusual. The next time (1-2 days later) I was in the building and the poison was gone. This really did bother me, but at first I thought that maybe Stephanie was trying to bait rats around her garden, but with three dogs, this was very risky.

Two days before we left, Norm succumbed to the pleadings from Stephanie for flour and sugar to bake some bread. When we were getting ready to leave she brought us a small loaf of bread which Norm stowed below. As soon as Stephanie left I told him not to eat it as the rat poison was missing. He thought about this for a bit then decided that dying half way to Samoa from internal bleeding was a bad way to go and even with a remote possibility, it would be better to avoid it. I dumped the bread overboard once we underway. (There the movie was pretty accurate).

As we left, the Grahams escorted us via dinghy to the last rock at the seaward side of the channel where Mac and Muff waved goodbye. Muff didn't say a thing but her expression was clear: she wished it were she and Mac who were sailing away. Norm and I talked a lot about the weird situation there and wondered aloud if murder would come to pass.

Q: Have you ever heard any stories from other people who have visited there that were of an unusual or even of a "supernatural" nature?

A: I never really heard any supernatural stuff about Palmyra, but its true isolation can easily lead to many nighttime twinges of fear when you are down there. There were plenty of real dangers as well: sharks everywhere, sharp and stinging coral, falling coconuts, and the possibility of contracting reef fish (*ciguatera*) poisoning. You knew you had to be careful all of the time to avoid getting hurt and this added some tension to everyone who visited.

You might also like a good laugh about the first trials, both of which I testified in. During the trials, part of the evidence was a set of pictures taken by Stephanie with a small camera. These pictures helped to put them in jail as there were five or six photos that were taken from the Graham's boat (the *Sea Wind*) just offshore of Palmyra that showed the *Iola*, sans front hatch, and with the Graham's dinghy towing behind.

In the photos, Buck was sinking the *Iola* and at the first trials, we all thought that the bodies of Muff and Mac were on board.

Buck and Stephanie sailed the *Sea Wind* into Pokai Bay first, about 20 miles from Honolulu. There she gave the film and money to a girl in the harbor and asked her to develop the pictures for them and they would retrieve them when they got back from Honolulu. Well, to get the pictures to Stephanie while she was in jail required someone she knew and might trust. The FBI found an old boyfriend trying to retire (or so he said) from the dope business. He got the pictures from the girl in the harbor and took them to Stephanie in the jail. She tried to dispose of them but the matron was ready and confiscated the pictures. At trial, when asked why she confiscated the pictures she said because they were pornographic. This brings up the recurring theme of the missing pictures that were believed to include pictures of Buck and their dogs. (I believe this to be true, but I only clearly remember seeing the originals of the six pictures admitted into evidence as these were the ones the prosecution asked me to look at closely. I am foggy as to how pornographic the rest of them really were). Nevertheless, one of the pictures showed Stephanie holding a Mahi-mahi fish across her breasts and I saw this one again a couple of years ago. At the trial when asked about the pictures Stephanie persistently denied any knowledge of them at all. Finally exasperated, the judge took the pictures, spread them on his bench, and selected the fish picture. Holding it in her face he said, “Come now Ms. Stearns, surely you remember the fish!” Too bad that line was not in the movie!

One more item of interest: before I left on the trip, I was working in the Yuma area, the same place Buck was eventually captured!

Amanda Lane's Encounter With Weird Hippie Castaways on Palmyra

Author's note: While I was still writing the first version of The Curse of Palmyra Island, I was contacted by a person whom I'll call Amanda Lane (true name withheld by request, but on file with the author). Amanda supplied a very intriguing tale about a visit she made to Palmyra in the summer of 1977 – just three years after the murders of the Grahams had occurred - in which she claims to have had a very weird encounter with a strange group of hippies who were living there. While I have no way to independently verify the authenticity of her story, it is presented here in its entirety so that the reader may make up his/her own mind.

In August of 1977, Amanda Lane - along with four male sailing companions whom we'll call Bob, Mike, Jim and Paul - decided to make a brief stop at Palmyra while in transit from Micronesia to their home port in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Amanda wrote that when they first arrived offshore of Palmyra, they were forced to heave-to in order to wait for the right tide to enter through Palmyra's narrow and dangerous passage. While drifting outside the channel, they decided to take a swim to get some relief from the hot weather. However, the first thing they noticed after slipping over the side of their sailboat was the great abundance of aggressive sharks in the water and as a result, decided that swimming was not such a good idea after all.

After the tide had changed, they began motoring into the lagoon and their eyes were immediately drawn to the many rusted World War II relics scattered around. Amanda noted how Palmyra's war relics seemed as if they were somehow more "ghostly" than similar relics they had encountered on their travels through Micronesia. But what struck them as particularly eerie was the fact that someone had painted "skull and crossbones" symbols on both the relics and nearby rocks, along with a warning not to eat any of the fish in the lagoon.

Once they had anchored their boat and rowed their dinghy to shore, they were surprised to be met there by three hippies, two men in their 20's - whom we'll call Tom and Dick - and one young and very pregnant 20-something girl - whom we'll call Jane. After getting over their initial shock at finding other people on a "deserted island," they learned that the hippies were living in one of the old military barracks that they had fixed up with items from their sailboat, a craft which Amanda described as old and in very bad shape.

Shortly after this initial meeting, the hippies Tom and Dick extended an invitation for the men from Amanda's boat to go fishing for

lobster with them on the reef the next morning. Amanda was invited by Jane to go out beachcombing while the men were out fishing. They agreed on a time and retired to their boat for the night.

But the next morning, to everyone's surprise, Tom and Dick showed up for the "fishing trip" armed with pistols, which they explained were for protection against the sharks. Feeling uneasy about going off with two armed strangers, Bob, Mike and Jim decided to bring along their own pistol. And as a precaution, Paul was left behind to maintain a watch on their sailboat and possessions. Amanda said that she was very uneasy about this "armed party" going out alone in such a remote place.

After the men had left, Amanda and Jane went out beachcombing together and Jane started telling Amanda all about their group's trip down to Palmyra. According to Amanda, she said that Jane told her that prior to coming to Palmyra, they had all been living on the big island of Hawaii, but that none of them had known each other beforehand. One of the hippie men in her group (Amanda couldn't remember which one Jane had indicated) had been in the process of fixing up an old sailboat and had asked around Hawaii for people to help him complete the work the boat needed, after which they would all sail to Palmyra to live off the land. Jane related how they had run into numerous problems with that simple plan right from the very beginning, but that they still decided to make the trip anyway, despite the fact that the boat was old and none of them were experienced sailors.

As Amanda tells it, here is where Jane's story began to take a turn for the weird: Jane related that during the sail down to Palmyra, everyone onboard had taken LSD and that while they were all under the influence of the drug, some sort of an incident had occurred where one of the hippies went "crazy." As a result of that episode, they had lost most of their survival gear overboard, including an emergency alert beacon and life-raft. When Amanda asked whether it was Tom or Dick who had gone crazy, Jane said it was neither, that there had been a third man along with them - we'll call him Harry - and that in a scenario that could have been lifted straight out of *Lord of the Flies*, "crazy" Harry had split off from the group immediately after they arrived on Palmyra and had gone off to live alone on another part of the island.

Jane told Amanda that the reason why Harry went off to live alone was because he had begun to believe that the other three were trying to kill him. Jane added that no one had seen Harry in a couple months and that when they went to the area where they thought Harry was living, all they found was a pot of beans, along with cans of rat poison lying around. (Author's note: a type of rat poison known as *warfarin* was available on the island in abundance, having been left behind on Palmyra by the military after World War II). Amanda wrote that she suddenly felt that what Jane was trying to imply to her was that

because of the rat poison and beans found at Harry's camp, she was not sure if Harry was even still alive, and if he *was* dead, whether or not he may have been *poisoned*.

Amanda said that at this point she began to get pretty nervous about what she was hearing. With visions dancing through her head of armed strangers, rat poison, and a crazed paranoid hippie who was either running amuck somewhere or who may have even been murdered here on this remote and isolated island, she told Jane that she thought it was time that they went back to the camp to see if the men had returned.

When Amanda and Jane returned to their camp, no one was there. Jane offered her some tea while they waited for the men to return, but Amanda, thinking fearfully about the rat poison story she had just heard, declined the offer.

While they sat around waiting for the men, Amanda began to get more and more worried, but wrote that she didn't really know what she should do at that point. But just when it seemed that she had been waiting forever, the door to the barracks suddenly burst open and in rushed her friend Bob, looking very scared. He urged Amanda out the door and after rounding up Jim and Mike, everyone returned to the boat where Paul was still on watch. Amanda told how they then began to immediately - and rather frantically - get the boat ready to sail, as Bob said they would need to move quickly in order to get out of the lagoon on the next tide.

As it turned out, the reason why Bob suddenly wanting to leave in such a hurry was because the hippie men had told him the same story that Amanda had heard from Jane. As a result, he was so unnerved by what he felt the men were trying to imply that he began to fear for everyone's safety, and especially for Amanda's, as she was alone back at the camp, and in a much more vulnerable position than the rest of them were.

As they were pulling up the anchor the hippies appeared onshore. Jane was now carrying a duffle bag and had a hat on. The hippies asked them if they would take Jane along to Honolulu with them as she was afraid to have her baby alone on Palmyra. But because Jane did not have a passport, Bob refused to take her along since they would have to go through customs and immigration once they entered Hawaii. Without a passport, she would be refused entry. However, Bob did radio the Coast Guard (who at that time were based on either Christmas or Fanning islands, she couldn't remember which) and let them know that there were people on Palmyra - including a pregnant woman - who were in need of immediate help. They then left as quickly as they could to sail home to Hawaii. On the voyage back, everyone compared stories and speculated on the possible outcome had they stayed any longer on

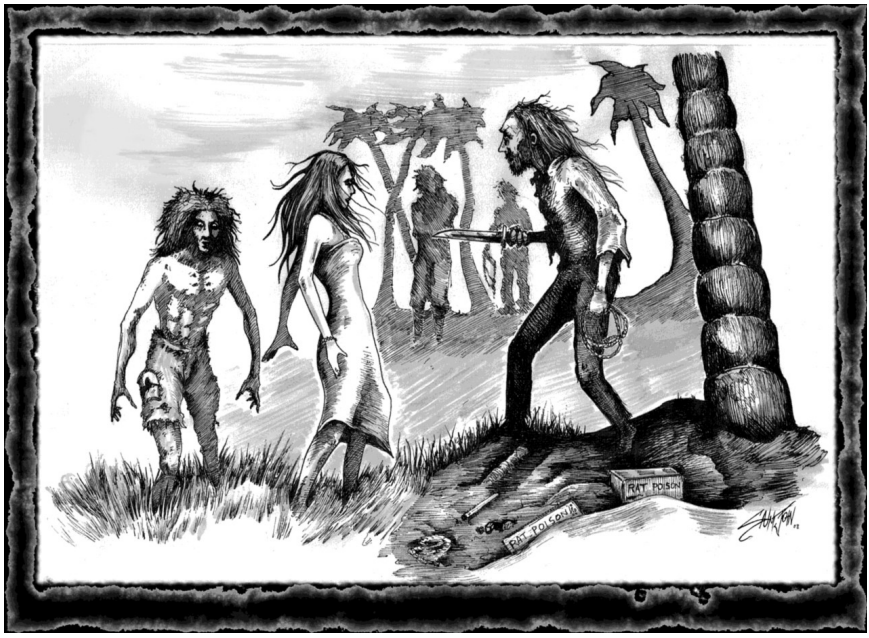
Palmyra or what might have happened if they had taken Jane along with them.

Fourteen years later, Amanda had all but forgotten about her experience on Palmyra until advertisements for the movie based on the book *And the Sea Will Tell* began running on TV in 1991. Not having read the book, she at first thought that the TV story was about the same hippies that she had met on Palmyra, as the plot had so many bizarre similarities to her own experience there - especially when she learned about the rat poison episode and the fact that the murderers of the Grahams were hippies.

But only after watching the movie and later reading the book did she realize that the murders had taken place *three years before* she and her group had visited there. Later, Amanda would speculate that the hippies she had met on Palmyra might have been fully aware of what had happened to the Graham's and were trying to use that notoriety to frighten them off the island or to trick them into taking "Jane" to Hawaii with them for some reason.

Amanda stated that she believes that she will probably never know the true answer to that question as she has since lost contact with all of the other members of the crew from that cruise.

Author's note: The following is only pure speculation, but an astute reader of the original version of this story wrote to me, wondering whether or not the four hippies that Amanda and her shipmates encountered might have actually been friends of Buck Walker. It is known through court records that Walker was expecting friends of his to join him on Palmyra at some point in order to resupply him with food and to take possession of the marijuana he was attempting to grow on the island. The only thing that seems to discount that idea is the story that the hippies told Amanda and her shipmates, i.e., that they had all met each other at random prior to sailing for the island.


RAT POISON
RAT POISON

The History of Palmyra

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Location, Topography and Weather

Palmyra Atoll is situated nine hundred sixty miles south by west of Honolulu and three hundred fifty-two miles north of the Equator. The atoll has an area of about one and one-half square miles and consists of around fifty islands in the shape of a horse shoe surrounding two lagoons (prior to the 1940's, three lagoons).

The islands stand but five to six feet above sea level, but dense vegetation rises to a height of seventy-five to ninety feet. Surrounding the islands and the lagoons is a platform of coral and hard sand. One can walk upon this platform from one island to another, even at high tide. At low tide parts of the platform are dry. The lagoons are separated by arms of the platform reef. They reach depths of from one hundred twenty to one hundred sixty feet.

The climate is wet and humid, as the dense vegetation evidences. Palmyra lies near the zone where the northeast and southeast trade winds meet. The contact between these bodies of air forces the warmer to rise, to become cooled and to drop its moisture in the form of tropical rain.

History: Under the Hawaiian Flag (Part I)

The atoll received its name from the American vessel *Palmyra* under the command of Captain Sawle, who sought shelter there on November 7, 1802. On February 26, 1862, His Majesty, Kamehameha IV (1834-63), Fourth King of Hawaii (1854-63), issued a commission to Captain Zenas Bent and Mr. Johnson B. Wilkinson, both Hawaiian citizens, to sail to Palmyra and to take possession of the atoll in the king's name.

On April 15, 1862, Captain Bent and Mr. Wilkinson landed in Palmyra and took formal possession of the atoll in accordance with the royal commission.

Captain Bent sold his rights to Palmyra to Mr. Wilkinson on December 24, 1862. This deed was recorded in 1885 in the Royal Registry of Conveyances in Honolulu. It conveyed all of the captain's:

> "Right, title and interest in and to all the property of whatever description now lying or situated on Palmyra Island (sic) in the Pacific Ocean, which island (sic) by a proclamation of His Majesty, Kamehameha IV, at present belongs to the Hawaiian Kingdom, and also all my right, title and interest in and to any partnership property that I may have an interest in as co-partner with the said Johnson Wilkinson."

After Mr. Wilkinson's death on June 25, 1866, in New Zealand, the captain's and Mr. Wilkinson's rights passed to Kalama (Mrs. Johnson B.) Wilkinson through Mr. Wilkinson's will, which was proved and registered in New Zealand and was later admitted to probate in Hawaii in 1898. United States v. Fullard-Leo, 331 U.S. 256, 277-78 (1947). After Mrs. Wilkinson's death in 1885, two of her three heirs transferred all their rights, titles and interests in Palmyra to a Mr. Wilcox, who conveyed the same to the Pacific Navigation Company, which sent a married couple to live in Palmyra September 1885-August 1886.

The Honorable Henry Ernest Cooper Sr.

By a series of four conveyances between 1888 and 1911 the Pacific Navigation Company's interests were transferred to the Honorable Henry Ernest Cooper Sr. of Honolulu.

In 1892 the Annexation Club, a small group in Honolulu interested in Hawaii's annexation to the United States, if no other measure served, held its meetings privately in the offices of Lorrin A. Thurston, Esq. The thought of such a group had originated with Judge Cooper. Long an ardent supporter of independence for Hawaii, Mr. Thurston had been forced to agree with Judge Cooper that it was wise not to promote annexation but to be ready to act if Her Majesty, Liliuokalani (1839-1917), Queen Regnant of Hawaii (1891-93), acted, in the group's estimation, *ultra vires*.

Judge Cooper served Saturday-Tuesday, January 14-17, 1893, as the Chairman of the Committee of Safety during the Hawaiian Revolution. On the morning of Sunday, January 15, 1893, the

Committee of Safety met and decided to call a mass meeting on Monday, January 16, to ask it to confirm the appointment of the Committee of Safety and to authorize it to take whatever measures it might consider necessary to protect the public interest.

The mass meeting held in the Honolulu Armory on Monday, January 16, was very large, enthusiastic and harmonious. The Committee of Safety, selected on Saturday, January 14, from the membership of the Annexation Club, was confirmed, including Judge Cooper's chairmanship, and given power to "further devise such ways and means as might be necessary to secure the permanent maintenance of law and order and the protection of life, liberty and property in Hawaii." On Monday afternoon the Committee, realizing that the community was in a state of unrest, requested the then American Minister to Hawaii, the Honorable John L. Stevens, to land a force from the *U.S.S. Boston*, then in the harbor. The Minister acceded to this request, and a body of sailors and marines came ashore late Monday afternoon. This force sent a guard to the American legation and found camping ground about where the present Federal Building in Honolulu now stands.

The Committee of Safety next met on Monday evening, January 16, to consider the organization of a new government. Some sixty citizens attended.

On the morning of Tuesday, January 17, the Honorable Sanford B. Dole completed his duties at the Honolulu courthouse, wrote his resignation as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the Kingdom of Hawaii and sent it to the Queen's Cabinet. Justice Dole then went to the headquarters of the Committee of Safety and accepted the Committee's appointment as President of the Provisional Government. Later that same day, from the steps of the Iolani Palace Judge Cooper read the proclamation abrogating the monarchy and establishing the Provisional Government. The proclamation appointed an executive body for the Provisional Government with Justice Dole as President and Foreign Minister. As the reading neared its end, a letter from President Dole announcing the Provisional Government's actions was sent to the American Minister, Mr. Stevens, who responded with a letter recognizing the Provisional Government. The remaining diplomats and consuls in Honolulu received similar notification during Tuesday evening. Before dawn on Wednesday, January 18, President Dole had replies from almost all of them recognizing the Provisional Government.

History: Under the Hawaiian Flag (Part II)

Mrs. Wilkinson's third heir transferred his rights in Palmyra to a Mr. Ringer, whose children in turn transferred their rights in Palmyra to Judge Cooper in 1912. Mr. Ringer's widow sold all her rights, titles and

interests in Palmyra to Maui and Clarke in 1912. Judge Cooper petitioned the Hawaii Land Court in 1912 to confirm his title. Maui and Clarke contested the petition and claimed to own Mrs. Ringer's dower interest in an undivided one-third of the atoll. Through the Attorney General of Hawaii, the Land Court decreed that Judge Cooper was the owner in fee simple subject to Mrs. Ringer's dower interest held by Maui and Clarke. United States v. Fullard-Leo, 331 U.S. 256, 278 (1947). Judge Cooper made short visits to Palmyra in 1913 and 1914, each lasting from two to three weeks; he built a house there in 1913. The judge's house collapsed by 1938. United States v. Fullard-Leo, 331 U.S. 256, 280 and 283 (1947).

By Captain Bent's and Mr. Wilkinson's actions the Fourth King of Hawaii acquired sovereignty over Palmyra, and the captain and Mr. Wilkinson obtained the private ownership of the atoll's islands. United States v. Fullard-Leo, 331 U.S. 256, 265 (1947). The U.S. Supreme Court in 1947 was of the opinion that, where there was power in the king or the officials of his kingdom to convey a title to Palmyra to the captain and Mr. Wilkinson between the years immediately following its annexation to the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1862 and prior to many of the private conveyances occurring in Hawaii much later in the nineteenth century, the Anglo-American doctrine of "lost grant" may be applied. The Supreme Court presumed the conveying of such a "grant" to the captain and Mr. Wilkinson and the subsequent "loss" of the "grant." United States v. Fullard-Leo, 331 U.S. 256, 273 (1947).

In order to apply the doctrine of "lost grant", the possession must be actual, open and exclusive. The payment of taxes is important. No taxes were collected from those who claimed to be owners of Palmyra prior to the years 1885-87, when the Pacific Navigation Company paid taxes on Palmyra to the Kingdom of Hawaii. Assessments were made annually from 1911 until 1959, and taxes were paid regularly during those years to the Territory of Hawaii by the claimants to the property. United States v. Fullard-Leo, 331 U.S. 256, 273-75 (1947).

It is apparent that, except for the royal grant from 1862, a paper title existed in Captain Bent and Mr. Wilkinson and their heirs. There is a record of the conveyances in Hawaii since 1885. Hence, there has been a claim of right to exclusive possession. That claim was manifested not only by transfers of paper title but also by the actual user of the property. The courts judge the sufficiency of actual and open possession of property in the light of the property's character and location. Palmyra is admittedly an isolated place, whose possession need be less than continuous to form the basis of a claim. It is true that the Anglo-American rule in applying the doctrine of "lost grant" requires an uninterrupted and long-continuing possession of a kind indicating the ownership of the fee. However, uninterrupted and long-continued

possession does not require a constant, actual occupancy where the character of the property does not lend itself to such use. In addition, no other private owner claims any rights in Palmyra. United States v. Fullard-Leo, 331 U.S. 256, 279-80 and 281 (1947).

History: Under the American Flag

Palmyra was specified as one of the islands included in the Joint Resolution of the Congress of July 7, 1898, which annexed the Republic of Hawaii to the United States. [Vide Volume 30, Statutes-at-Large, page 750, et Senate Document No. 16, Fifty-fifth Congress, Third Session, page 4.] In 1912, at Judge Cooper's suggestion, the then Governor of Hawaii asked the Secretary of the Interior to send an American vessel to Palmyra to confirm American sovereignty. Thus, on February 17, 1912, the U.S. Navy cruiser West Virginia under the command of Rear Admiral W.H.H. Southerland left Honolulu and returned on February 28, 1912, with the announcement that the cruiser's officers had taken formal possession of Palmyra in the name of the United States on February 20-21, 1912.

World War II

During the 1940's the U.S. Navy stationed six thousand sailors in the atoll. They dredged a seaplane runway which merged the atoll's two western lagoons into one. A causeway was built on the remaining reef. At the same time, the sailors joined three of the islands into one and built a landplane runway about one mile long, which the U.S. Air Force used until 1961.

Palmyra Atoll was a part of the Territory of Hawaii (United States v. Fullard-Leo, 331 U.S. 256, 266 (1947)) prior to Hawaii's entering the Union on August 21, 1959. Before this date, the Territory of Hawaii provided law enforcement to Palmyra as a part of Hawaii. Inasmuch as the Congress expressly excluded Palmyra from the State of Hawaii by section 2 of the Hawaii Statehood Act (Public Law 86-3, March 18, 1959), legislation was required to provide for law enforcement. The Congress accomplished this by Public Law 86-3 (March 18, 1959), which extended the jurisdiction of the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii to cases arising in Palmyra (Title 48, U.S. Code, section 644a).

From August 12, 1898, until April 30, 1900, Hawaii (including Palmyra Atoll) was an unincorporated U.S. territory. On the latter date the Congress made the U.S. Constitution and all U.S. laws applicable to Hawaii (including Palmyra Atoll) as elsewhere in the several States and the District of Columbia. On April 30, 1900, Hawaii (including Palmyra Atoll) became an incorporated U.S. territory. Incorporation has been

consistently interpreted as a perpetual state. Once incorporated, an area cannot be de-incorporated. So, when Hawaii (excluding Palmyra Atoll) was admitted as one of the several States, Palmyra remained and continues to remain an incorporated U.S. territory. It is, in fact, of the fourteen U.S. insular areas, the only incorporated U.S. territory, that is, a Territory.

Section 48 of the Hawaii Statehood Act continued to vest all executive and legislative authority necessary for the civil administration of Palmyra in the Secretary of the Interior, until the Congress provided for the government of Palmyra. Section 48 maintained that all judicial authority for the government of Palmyra other than that contained in Title 48, U.S. Code, section 644a, would continue to be vested as well in the Secretary of the Interior. Section 48 allowed that the Secretary might confer on the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii jurisdiction in addition to that contained in Title 48, U.S. Code, section 644a, and those judicial functions and duties which the Secretary deemed appropriate for Palmyra's civil administration.

Executive Order No. 10967 (October 10, 1961) restated that the Secretary of the Interior was responsible for Palmyra's civil administration and all executive and legislative authority necessary for that administration and all judicial authority other than that contained in Title 48, U.S. Code, section 644a. Similarly, the order permitted the Secretary to confer on the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii jurisdiction in addition to that contained in Title 48, U.S. Code, section 644a, and those judicial functions and duties which the Secretary deemed appropriate for Palmyra's civil administration. This executive order will continue in force until the Congress provides for Palmyra's civil administration.

Secretary of the Interior's Order No. 2862 (March 16, 1962) gave the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii jurisdiction in the filing and recording of written *muniments* of title to land in Palmyra.

Current Circumstances

The Office of Insular Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior, administers the atoll, whose islands remain privately owned. All but two of Palmyra's islands are owned by the three brothers, Messrs. Leslie Vincent, Dudley and Ainsley Fullard-Leo, all of Honolulu. The brothers' parents, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Fullard-Leo, acquired title on August 19, 1922, to their islands from Judge Cooper for the purchase price of fifteen million (15,000,000) dollars. (1) United States v. Fullard-Leo, 331 U.S. 256, 279 (1947). The brothers' spokesman is Mr. Leslie Vincent Fullard-Leo, whom one may reach him in Honolulu at 46090 Pu'ulena Street, Kaneohe, Hawaii 96744. Judge Cooper died on May 15, 1929. His heirs

retain the two islands which the Messrs. Fullard-Leo do not own, that is, two of the five Home Islands.

In July 1990 Mr. Peter Savio of Honolulu took over a lease on the atoll till the year 2065 and formed a corporation, the Palmyra Development Company. Mr. Savio intends to develop in the atoll residential areas and tourist spots that will emphasize a "get-away-from-it-all" lifestyle. Mr. Savio has said that he has an agreement with the atoll's owners to buy the atoll for thirty-six million (36,000,000) dollars. Mr. Savio has carried the atoll's for-sale listing since 1987. Except for rare, short-term travelers arriving by boat, the atoll is currently uninhabited.

On January 20, 1995, the Honorable Elton Gallegly (Rep.-California), chair of the House Resources Subcommittee on Native American and Insular Affairs in the One Hundred Fourth Congress, introduced H.R. 602, the Omnibus Territories Bill of 1995. H.R. 602 provided in title III (the Insular Areas Consolidation Bill of 1995), sections 301-306, that the State of Hawaii should include Palmyra Atoll.

Executive Order No. 10967 (October 10, 1961) restated that the Secretary of the Interior was responsible for Palmyra's civil administration and all executive and legislative authority necessary for the administration and all judicial authority other than that which had been conferred on the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawaii. This Executive order will continue in force until the Congress provides for Palmyra's civil administration. (2)

On May 4, 2000, *The Nature Conservancy* announced their intent to purchase Palmyra.

On November 20, 2000, *The Nature Conservancy* purchased Palmyra Atoll for $37 million, one of the most costly land acquisitions ever by a conservation group.

On January 18, 2001, The US Fish and Wildlife Service gave Palmyra federal protection and created a national wildlife refuge surrounding all of Palmyra Atoll. Palmyra is now protected from any commercial development and exploitation. (3)

Notes and Sources to the History of Palmyra:

(1) Prior to the purchase of Palmyra by *The Nature Conservancy*, I corresponded with Ted Cooper who informed me that the 15 million dollar sale price figure was a typo and that the actual amount was really $15,000.00.

(2) *See also* www.doi.gov/oia/Islandpages/palmyrapage.htm.

(3) See www.oneworldjourneys.com/expeditions/palmyra

About the Author

Curt Rowlett is a researcher and writer with a penchant for the mystical, mysterious, and macabre. His work has appeared in the books *Popular Paranoia*, *Labyrinth13: True Tales of the Occult, Crime & Conspiracy, The Curse of Palmyra Island*, *Riding On Your Fears*, and the magazines *Fortean Times*, *Strange Magazine*, *Paranoia*, and *Steamshovel Press*.

He is also: a serious student of the paranormal and the unexplained, a former merchant marine who has traveled all over the world, a rock musician, and an ever-aspiring southern gentleman.

For more information, please visit: www.labyrinth13.com

Footnotes

[1] The Bermuda Triangle is an area in the Atlantic Ocean with boundaries generally thought to be marked by the island of Bermuda to the north, Miami, Florida to the south, and San Juan, Puerto Rico to the east. Since the time of Columbus, numerous ships, planes, and people have disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle area under highly unusual and mystifying circumstances that cannot be easily explained as simple accident or human oversight. Theories as to what has caused the calamities include stories of survivors who report being caught in time warps and strange fogs, along with observable magnetic anomalies, eruptions of underwater gases, and even extraterrestrial beings. The *Marie Celeste* and the *Flying Dutchman* are but two of the most famous examples among the reported sightings of those maritime apparitions known as "ghost" or "phantom ships." In 1872, the abandoned *Mary Celeste* was discovered near Portugal, mysteriously empty of her entire crew, but still in good working order, under full sail, and still making way for the Straits of Gibraltar; the legend of the *Flying Dutchman* states that it is a cursed vessel doomed to sail the world's oceans forever due to a serious transgression on the part of her captain, which ranges from "playing dice with the Devil for his soul" to "being in league with Satan" in order to insure great speed for his ship.

[2] *And the Sea Will Tell*, by Vincent Bugliosi with Bruce B. Henderson, Ivy Books/Ballantine Books, 1991.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 270.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 286.

[5] See *The Mysterious Appearance and Disappearance of Maria Laxara," Strange Magazine*, 1995, Issue # 16, article by Kristan Lawson. "Phantom islands" are often found on old nautical maps, usually as the result of misidentified, but *known* islands. However, according to this story, Maria Laxara was accurately charted multiple times over the years by professional navigators, but relates how some sailors later seeking the island found only empty sea and sky where the charts said the island was supposed to be. See also, *Invisible Horizons: Strange Mysteries of the Sea, True Stories That Defy Logic*, by Vincent H. Gaddis. In chapter 2, *Vanishing Islands*, Gaddis tells of islands that seem to come and go and of the mariners whose search for phantom islands brought them only to an empty ocean full of plant matter, as if from an island that was newly submerged or otherwise lost.

[6] From the *CIA World Factbook* entry for Palmyra atoll.

[7] For a contrasting point of view as to the nature of the sharks on Palmyra, see *Kawabunga's South Sea Adventure*, by Charles S. Dewell. That book contains an entire chapter describing the author's idyllic three-week stay on Palmyra, in which he recounts his own adventure of swimming and snorkeling in Palmyra's lagoons. While Dewell does not report any serious incidents of aggressive behavior by Palmyra's sharks, he does state that he sighted vast numbers of sharks while there and was extremely wary of them while in the water. See also the *Appendix* section of this book, *My Correspondence with Sharon Jordan, Rob Jordan, Tom Wolfe, and Amanda Lane* in which Ms. Jordan states that she swam often in *all* of the lagoons of Palmyra.

[8] Edmund Fanning (July 16, 1769 - April 23, 1841) discovered three South Pacific islands, including Fanning Island, which bears his name, and both Washington and Palmyra islands.

[9] *Fate*, March 1953, *Premonition of Danger*, by H.F. Thomas in *Connecticut Circle*; see also *Invisible Horizons*, by Vincent H. Gaddis, Ace Books, Inc., 1965.

[10] Sawle Point, one of Palmyra's many islets, was named after Captain Sawle and is near the main entrance of the approach channel to the atoll.

[11] *And the Sea Will Tell*, p. 67.

[12] *Ibid*, p. 67.

[13] See *History, Hoax, and Hype: The Oak Island Legend*, by Richard E. Joltes.

[14] *And the Sea Will Tell*, p. 67.

[15] *Ibid*, p. 68.

[16] See *The History of Palmyra* section of this book, pp. 53-55.

[17] *And the Sea Will Tell*, p. 18. Note that numerous military history sources on the Internet state that this event occurred on a different day (a day earlier, on December 23, 1941) and that not one, but *two* Japanese submarines, the I-71 and I-72, were involved in the attack on Palmyra. A typical entry reads as follows: "December 23, 1941 - Palmyra Island is shelled by Japanese submarines I-71 and I-72." During the attack on Pearl Harbor, the I-71 was assigned to patrol just south of Oahu and only days prior to the attack on Palmyra, was subjected to several depth-charge attacks by U.S. naval forces. On February 1, 1944, the I-71 was sunk off of Buka Island in Papua New Guinea by a U.S. depth charge attack. The I-72 was stationed at the entrance to Pearl Harbor during the attack. On November 27, 1942, the I-72 was reported to be lost with all hands off of Guadalcanal; the cause of the loss remains unknown. See: www.combinedfleet.com/I-172.htm

[18] *Ibid*, p. 18.

[19] From email correspondence between William Sanders and the author.

[20] See *Appendix* section of this book, *My Correspondence with Sharon Jordan, Rob Jordan, Tom Wolfe, and Amanda Lane*.

[21] *Ibid*.

[22] *And the Sea Will Tell*, pages 644-646. That book discusses how the average body, when immersed in water, will float in about ten days and that in 1976, Mobster Johnny Roselli was murdered, stuffed into a fifty-five gallon steel drum, weighted down with heavy chains and dumped into the ocean off the coast of Florida. Ten days later, his body was discovered by some fishermen when the gases from decomposition produced enough buoyancy to float the drum to the surface.

[23] From letter correspondence between Vincent T. Bugliosi and the author.

[24] See *Appendix* section of this book, *My Correspondence with Sharon Jordan, Rob Jordan, Tom Wolfe, and Amanda Lane*.

[25] *And the Sea Will Tell*, p. 411.

[26] *And the Sea Will Tell*, pp. 374-375; from correspondence between Tom Wolfe and the author.

[27] From correspondence between Tom Wolfe and the author.

[28] From correspondence between Amanda Lane and the author.

[29] *Desperate Journeys, Abandoned Souls*, by Edward E. Leslie, Houghton Mifflin Company, p. 517-520.

[30] *And the Sea Will Tell*, pp. 637-638. See also article titled, *Posted Missing: Search and Rescue Efforts in Vast Pacific often "Mission Impossible"* at: https://tinyurl.com/udbdrvp

[31] *And the Sea Will Tell*, p. 637.

[32] See *Island Paradise, Island Paradox*, *Palmyra: the Pacific's prettiest spot, or a dangerous crossroad ruled by a tyrant?* by Mark Smaalders and Carl Reller, *Cruising World Magazine*, September 1998 issue.

[33] See *12 Stranded on Remote Pacific Island*, April 23, 2008, *United Press International, Inc.* article.

[34] *And the Sea Will Tell*, p. 38.

[35] *Ibid*, pp. 34-38.

[36] See article titled, *Palmyra owners may sell; The Nature Conservancy and a U.S. agency would convert the Pacific atoll to a refuge*, by Lori Tighe, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, November 10, 1998.

Additional Sources of Interest

Palmyra Atoll section of *The Nature Conservancy* website at: https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/hawaii/stories-in-hawaii/palmyra-175-years-of-science

And the Sea Will Tell, a two-part 1991 television mini-series based on the original book, directed by Tommy Lee Wallace, and starring Richard Crenna, James Brolin, and Rachael Ward. This film sticks mainly to the legal facts of the case and the actual timeline of events. It does take some artistic liberties, in that some characters are combinations of multiple people, and certain events are either time-compressed or eliminated altogether. See the IMDb entry here: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101345/?ref_=ttfc_fc_tt